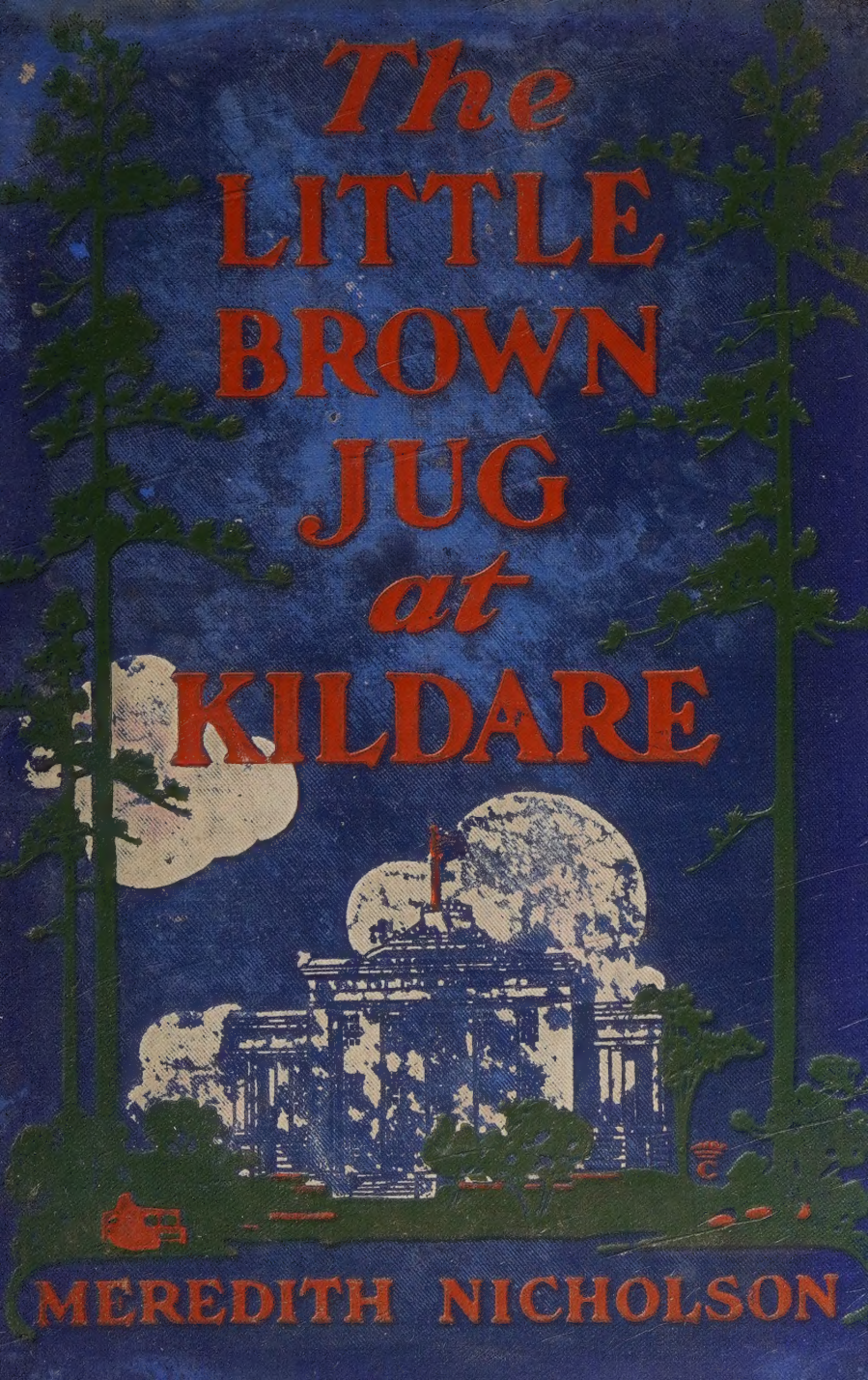
The LITTLE BROWN JUG at KILDARE



MEREDITH NICHOLSON

M. D. Pokerson 1939

THE LITTLE BROWN JUG AT KILDARE

By

MEREDITH NICHOLSON

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAGG

Oh, for you that I never knew,
Only in dreams that bind you!—
By Spring's own grace I shall know your face
When under the may I find you!
—*H. C. Bunner*

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THE LITTLE BROWN JUG AT KILDARE

TO YOU AT THE GATE

There was a daisy-meadow, that flowed brimming to the stone wall at the roadside, and on the wooded crest beyond a lamp twinkled in a house round which stole softly the unhurried, eddyless dusk. You stood at the gate, your arms folded on the top bar, your face uplifted, watching the stars and the young moon of June. I was not so old but that I marked your gown of white, your dark head, your eyes like the blue of mid-ocean sea-water in the shadow of marching billows. As my step sounded you turned toward me, startled, a little disdainful, maybe; then you smiled gravely; but a certain dejection of attitude, a sweet wistfulness of lips and eyes, arrested and touched me; and I stole on guiltily, for who was I to intrude upon a picture so perfect, to which moon and stars were glad contributors? As I reached the crown of the road, where it dipped down to a brook that whispered your name, I paused and looked back, and you waved your hand as though dismissing me to the noisy world of men.

In other Junes I have kept tryst with moon and stars beside your gate, where daisies flow still across the meadow, and insect voices blur the twilight peace; but I have never seen again your house of shadows among the trees, or found you dreaming there at the gate with uplifted face and wistful eyes. But from the ridge, where the road steals down into the hollow with its fireflies and murmuring water, I forever look back to the star- and moon-hung gate in the wall, and see your slim, girlish figure, and can swear that you wave your hand.

Katonah, June 30, 1908. *M. N.*

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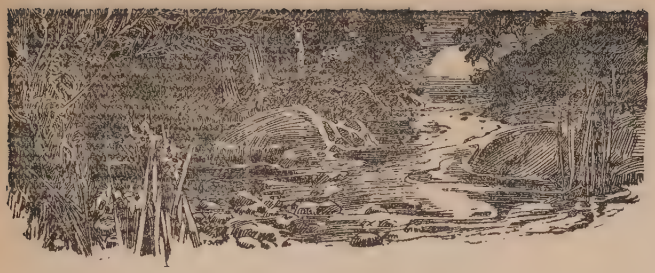


THE LITTLE BROWN JUG AT KILDARE

CHAPTER I

TWO GENTLEMEN SAY GOOD-BY

"If anything really interesting should happen to me I think I should drop dead," declared Ardmore as he stood talking to Griswold in the railway station at Atlanta. "I entered upon this life under false pretenses, thinking that money would make the game easy, but here I am, twenty-seven years old, stalled at the end of a blind alley, with no light ahead; and to be quite frank, old man, I don't believe you have the advantage of me. What's the matter with us, anyhow?"

"The mistake we make," replied Griswold, "is in fail-

ing to seize opportunities when they offer. You and I have talked ourselves hoarse a thousand times planning schemes we never pull off. We are cursed with indecision, that's the trouble with us. We never see the handwriting on the wall, or if we do, it's just a streak of hieroglyphics, and we don't know what it means until we read about it in the newspapers. But I thought you were satisfied with the thrills you got running as a reform candidate for alderman in New York last year. It was a large stage and the lime-light struck you pretty often. Didn't you get enough? No doubt they'd be glad to run you again."

Ardmore glanced hastily about and laid his hand heavily on his friend's shoulder.

"Don't mention it—don't think of it! No more politics in mine. The world may go hang if it waits for me to set it right. What I want is something different, a real adventure—something with spice in it. I have bought everything money can buy, and now I'm looking for something that can't be tagged with a price."

"There's your yacht and the open sea," suggested Griswold.

"Sick of it! Sick to death of it!"

"You're difficult, old man, and mighty hard to please.

Why don't you turn explorer and go in for the North Pole?"

"Perfectly bully! I've thought of it a lot, but I want to be sure I've cleaned up everything else first. It's always up there waiting—on ice, so to speak—but when it's done once there will be nothing left. I want to save that for the last call."

"You said about the same thing when we talked of Thibet that first evening we met at the University Club, and now the Grand Lama sings in all the phonographs, and for a penny you can see him in a kinetoscope, eating his luncheon. I remember very well that night. We were facing each other at a writing-table, and you looked up timidly from your letter and asked me whether there were two *g's* in aggravate, and I answered that it depended on the meaning—one *g* for a mild case, two for a severe one—and you laughed, and we began talking. Then we found out how lonesome we both were, and you asked me to dinner, and then took me to that big house of yours up there in Fifth Avenue and showed me the pictures in your art gallery, and we found out that we needed each other."

"Yes, I had needed you all right!" And Ardmore sniffed dolefully, and complained of the smoke that was

drifting in upon them from the train sheds. "I wish you wouldn't always be leaving me. You ought to give up your job and amuse me. You're the only chap I know who doesn't talk horse or automobile or yacht, or who doesn't want to spend whole evenings discussing champagne vintages; but you're too good a man to be wasted on a college professorship. Better let me endow an institution that will make you president—there might be something in that."

"It would make me too prominent, so that when we really make up our minds to go in for adventures I should be embarrassed by my high position. As a mere lecturer on *The Libeling of Sunken Ships* in a law school, I'm the most obscure person in the world. And for another thing, we couldn't risk the scandal of tainted money. It would be nasty to have your great-grandfather's whisky deals with the Mohawk Indians chanted in a college yell."

The crowd surged past them to the Washington express, and a waiting porter picked up Griswold's bags.

"Wish you wouldn't go. I have three hours to wait," said Ardmore, looking at his watch, "and the only Atlanta man I know is out of town."

"What did you say you were going to New Orleans

for?" demanded Griswold, taking out his ticket and moving toward the gate. "I thought you exhausted the Creole restaurants long ago."

"The fact is," faltered Ardmore, coloring, "I'm looking for some one."

"Out with it—out with it!" commanded his friend.

"I'm looking for a girl I saw from a car window day before yesterday. I had started north, and my train stopped to let a south-bound train pass somewhere in North Carolina. The girl was on the south-bound sleeper, and her window was opposite mine. She put aside the magazine she was reading and looked me over rather coolly."

"And you glanced carelessly in the opposite direction and pulled down your shade, of course, like the well-bred man you are—" interrupted Griswold, holding fast to Ardmore's arm as they walked down the platform.

"I did no such thing. I looked at her and she looked at me. And then my train started—"

"Well, trains have a way of starting. Does the romance end here?"

"Then, just at the last moment, she winked at me!"

"It was a cinder, Ardy. The use of soft coal on railways is one of the saddest facts of American transporta-

tion. I need hardly remind you, Mr. Ardmore, that nice girls don't wink at strange young men. It isn't done!"

"I would have you know, Professor, that this girl is a lady."

"Don't be so irritable, and let me summarize briefly on your own hypothesis: You stared at a strange girl and she winked at you, safe in the consciousness that she would never see you again. And now you are going to New Orleans to look for her. She will probably meet you at the station, with her bridesmaids and wedding cake all ready for you. And you think this will lead to an adventure—you defer finding the North Pole for this—for this? Poor Ardy! But did she toss her card from the window? Why New Orleans? Why not Minneapolis, or Bangor, Maine?"

"I'm not an ass, Grissy. I caught the name of the sleeper—you know they're all named, like yachts and tall buildings—the name of her car was the *Alexandra.* I asked our conductor where it was bound for, and he said it was the New Orleans car. So I took the first train back, ran into you here, and that's the whole story to date."

"I admire your spirit. New Orleans is much pleasanter than the polar ice, and a girl with a winking eye

isn't to be overlooked in this vale of tears. What did this alleviating balm for tired eyes look like, if you remember anything besides the wicked wink?"

"She was bareheaded, and her hair was wonderfully light and fluffy, and it was parted in the middle and tied behind with a black ribbon in a great bow. She rested her cheek on her hand—her elbow on the window-sill, you know—and she smiled a little as the car moved off, and winked—do you understand? Her eyes were blue, Grissy, big and blue—and she was perfectly stunning."

"There are winks and winks, Ardy," observed Griswold with a judicial air. "There is the wink inadvertent, to which no meaning can be attached. There is the wink deceptive, usually given behind the back of a third person, and a vulgar thing which we will not associate with your girl of the *Alexandra*. And then, to be brief, there is the wink of mischief, which is observed occasionally in persons of exceptional bringing up. There are moments in the lives of all of us when we lose our grip on conventions—on morality, even. The psychology of this matter is very subtle. Here you are, a gentleman of austerely correct life; here is a delightful girl, on whom you flash in an out-of-the-way corner of the world. And she, not wholly displeased by the frank

admiration in your eyes—for you may as well concede that you stared at her—"

"Well, I suppose I did look at her," admitted Ardmore reluctantly.

"Pardonably, no doubt, just as you would look at a portrait in a picture gallery, of course. This boarding-school miss, who had never before lapsed from absolute propriety, felt the conventional world crumble beneath her as the train started. She could no more have resisted the temptation to wink than she could have refused a caramel or an invitation to appear as best girl at a church wedding. Thus wireless communication is established between soul and soul for an instant only, and then you are cut off forever. Perhaps, in the next world, Ardy—"

Griswold and Ardmore had often idealized themselves as hopeless pursuers of the elusive, the unattainable, the impossible; or at least Ardmore had, and Griswold had entered into the spirit of this sort of thing for the joy it gave Ardmore. They had discussed frequently the call of soul to soul—the quick glance passing between perfect strangers in crowded thoroughfares, and had fruitlessly speculated as to their proper course in the event the call seemed imperative. A glance of the eye is one thing, but

it is quite another to address a stranger and offer eternal friendship. The two had agreed that, while, soul-call or no soul-call, a gentleman must keep clear of steamer flirtations, and avoid even the most casual remarks to strange young women in any circumstances, a gentleman of breeding and character may nevertheless follow the world's long trails in search of a never-to-be-forgotten face.

The fact is that Ardmore was exceedingly shy, and a considerable experience of fashionable society had not diminished this shortcoming. Griswold, on the other hand, had the Virginian's natural social instinct, but he suffered from a widely-diffused impression that much learning had made him either indifferent or extremely critical where women are concerned.

Ardmore shrugged his shoulders and fumbled in his coat pockets as though searching for ideas. An austere composure marked his countenance at all times, and emphasized the real distinction of his clean-cut features. His way of tilting back his head and staring dreamily into vacancy had established for him a reputation for stupidity that was wholly undeserved.

"Please limit the discussion to the present world, Professor."

When Ardmore was displeased with Griswold he called him Professor, in a withering tone that disposed of the academic life.

"We shall limit it to New Orleans or the universe, as you like."

"I'm disappointed in you, Grissy. You don't take this matter in the proper spirit. I'm going to find that girl, I tell you."

"I want you to find her, Ardy, and throw yourself at her feet. Be it far from me to deprive you of the joy of search. I thoroughly admire your resolute spirit. It smacks of the old heroic times. Nor can I conceal from you my consuming envy. If a girl should flatter me with a wink I should follow her thrice round the world. She should not elude me anywhere in the Copernican system. If it were not the nobler part for you to pursue alone, I should forsake my professorship and buckle on my armor and follow your standard—

With the winking eye
For my battle-cry."

And Griswold hummed the words, beating time with his stick, much to Ardmore's annoyance.

"In my ignorance," Griswold continued, "I recall but

one allusion to the wink in immortal song. If my memory serves me, it is no less a soul than Browning who sings:

> 'All heaven, meanwhile, condensed into one eye
> Which fears to lose the wonder, should it wink.'

You seem worried, Ardy. Does the wink press so heavily, or what's the matter?"

"The fact is, I'm in trouble. My sister says I've got to marry."

"Which sister?"

"Mrs. Atchison. You know Nellie? She's a nice girl and she's a good sister to me, but she's running me too hard on this marrying business. She's going to bring a bunch of girls down to Ardsley in a few days, and she says she'll stay until I make a choice."

Griswold whistled.

"Then, as we say in literary circles, you're up against it. No wonder you're beginning to take notice of the frolicsome boarding-school girl who winks at the world. I believe I'd rather take chances myself with that amiable sort than marry into your Newport transatlantic set."

"Well, one thing's certain, Grissy. You've got to

come to Ardsley and help me out while those people are there. Nellie likes you; she thinks you're terribly intellectual and all that, and if you'll throw in a word now and then, why—"

"Why, I may be able to protect you from the crafts and assaults of your sister. You seem to forget, Ardy, that I'm not one of your American leisure class. I'm always delighted to meet Mrs. Atchison, but I'm a person of occupations. I have a consultation in Richmond to-morrow, then me for Charlottesville. We have examinations coming on, and, while I like to play with you, I've positively got to work."

"Not if I endow all the chairs in the university! You've not only got to come, but you're going to be there the day they arrive."

Thomas Ardmore, of New York and Ardsley, struck his heavy stick—he always carried a heavy stick—smartly on the cement platform in the stress of his feeling. He was much shorter than Griswold, to whom he was deeply attached—for whom he had, indeed, the frank admiration of a small boy for a big brother. He sometimes wondered how fully Griswold entered into the projects of adventure which he, in his supreme idleness, planned and proposed; but he himself had never

been quite ready to mount horse or shake out sail, and what Griswold had said about indecision rankled in his heart. He was sorry now that he had told of this new enterprise to which he had pledged himself, but he grew lenient toward Griswold's lack of sympathy as he reflected that the quest of a winking girl was rather beneath the dignity of a gentleman wedded not merely to the law, but to the austere teaching profession as well. In his heart he forgave Griswold, but he was all the more resolved to address himself stubbornly to his pursuit of the deity of the car *Alexandra,* for only by finding her could he establish himself in Griswold's eyes as a man of action, capable of carrying through a scheme requiring cleverness and tact.

Ardmore was almost painfully rich, but the usual diversions of the wealthy did not appeal to him, and, having exhausted foreign travel, he spent much time on his estate in the North Carolina hills, where he could ride all day on his own land, and where he read prodigiously in a huge library that he had assembled with special reference to works on piracy, a subject that had attracted him from early youth.

It was this hobby that had sealed his friendship with Griswold, who had relinquished the practice of law, after

a brilliant start in his native city of Richmond, to accept the associate professorship of admiralty in the law department of the University of Virginia. Marine law had a particular fascination for Griswold from its essentially romantic character. As a law student he had read all the decisions in admiralty that the libraries afforded, and, though faithfully serving the university, he still occasionally accepted retainers in admiralty cases of unusual importance. His lectures were constantly attended by students in other departments of the university for sheer pleasure in Griswold's racy and entertaining exposition of the laws touching the libeling of schooners and the recovery of jettisoned cargoes. Henry Maine Griswold was tall, slender and dark, and he hovered recklessly, as he might have put it, on the brink of thirty. He stroked his thin brown mustache habitually, as though to hide the smile that played about his humorous mouth—a smile that lay even more obscurely in his fine brown eyes. He did violence to the academic traditions by dressing with metropolitan care, gray being his prevailing note, though his scarfs ventured upon bold color schemes that interested his students almost as much as his lectures. The darkest fact of his life—and one shared with none—was his experiments in verse.

From his undergraduate days he had written occasionally a little song, quite for his own pleasure in versifying, and to a little sheaf of these things in manuscript he still added a few verses now and then.

"Don't worry, Ardy," he was saying to his friend as "all aboard" was called, "and don't be reckless. When you get through looking for the winking eye, come up to Charlottesville and we'll plan *The True Life of Captain Kidd* that is some day going to make us famous."

"I'll wire you later," replied Ardmore, clinging to his friend's hand a moment after the train began to move. Griswold leaned out of the vestibule to wave a last farewell to Ardmore, and something very kind and gentle and good to see shone in the lawyer's eyes. He went into the car smiling, for he called Ardmore his best friend, and he was amused by his last words, which were always Ardmore's last in their partings, and were followed usually by telegrams about the most preposterous things, or suggestions for romantic adventures, or some new hypothesis touching Captain Kidd and his buried treasure. Ardmore never wrote letters; he always telegraphed, and he enjoyed filing long, mysterious and expensive messages with telegraph operators in ob-

scure places where a scrupulous ten words was the frugal limit.

Griswold lighted a cigar and opened the afternoon Atlanta papers in the smoking compartment. His eye was caught at once by imperative head-lines. It is not too much to say that the eye of the continent was arrested that evening by the amazing disclosure, now tardily reaching the public, that something unusual had occurred at the annual meeting of the Cotton Planters' Association at New Orleans on the previous day. Every copy-reader and editor, every paragrapher on every newspaper in the land had smiled and reached for a fresh pencil as a preliminary bulletin announced the passing of harsh words between the Governor of North Carolina and the Governor of South Carolina. It may as well be acknowledged here that just what really happened at the Cotton Planters' convention will never be known, for this particular meeting was held behind closed doors, and as the two governors were honored guests of the association, no member has ever breathed a word touching an incident that all most sincerely deplored. Indeed, no hint of it would ever have reached the public had it not been that both gentlemen hurriedly left the convention hall, refused to keep their appointments to speak at

the banquet that followed the business meetings, and were reported to have taken the first trains for their respective capitals. It was whispered by a few persons that the Governor of South Carolina had taken a fling at the authenticity of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence; it was rumored in other quarters that the Governor of North Carolina was the aggressor, he having—it was said—declared that a people (meaning the freemen of the commonwealth of South Carolina) who were not intelligent enough to raise their own hay, and who, moreover, bought that article in Ohio, were not worth the ground necessary for their decent interment. It is not the purpose of this chronicle either to seek the truth of what passed between the two governors at New Orleans, or to discuss the points of history and agriculture raised in the statements just indicated. As every one knows, the twentieth of May (or was it the thirty-first!), 1775, is solemnly observed in North Carolina as the day on which the patriots of Mecklenburg County severed the relations theretofore existing between them and his Majesty, King George the Third. Equally well known is the fact that in South Carolina it is an article of religious faith that on that twentieth day of May, 1775, the citizens of Mecklenburg County, North

Carolina, cheered the English flag and adopted resolutions reaffirming their ancient allegiance to the British crown. This controversy and the inadequacy of the South Carolina hay crop must be passed on to the pamphleteers, with such other vexed questions as Andrew Jackson's birthplace—more debated than Homer's and not to be carelessly conceded to the strutting sons of Waxhaw.

Griswold read of the New Orleans incident with a smile, while several fellow-passengers discussed it in a tone of banter. One of them, a gentleman from Mississippi, presently produced a flask, which he offered to the others, remarking, "As the Governor of North Carolina said to the Governor of South Carolina," which was, to be sure, pertinent to the hour and the discussion, and bristling with fresh significance.

"They were both in Atlanta this morning," said the man with the flask, "and they would have been traveling together on this train if they hadn't met in the ticket office and nearly exploded with rage."

The speaker was suddenly overcome with his own humor, and slapped his knee and laughed; then they all laughed, including Griswold.

"One ought to have taken the lower berth and one the

upper to make it perfect," observed an Alabama man. "I wonder when they'll get home."

"They'll probably both walk to be sure they don't take the same train," suggested a commercial traveler from Cincinnati, who had just come from New Orleans. "Their friends are doing their best to keep them apart. They both have a reputation for being quick on the trigger."

"Bosh!" exclaimed Griswold. "I dare say it's all a newspaper story. There's no knife-and-pistol nonsense in the South any more. They'll both go home and attend to their business, and that will be the last of it. The people of North Carolina ought to be proud of Dangerfield; he's one of the best governors they ever had. And Osborne is a first-class man, too, one of the old Palmetto families."

"I guess they're both all right," drawled the Mississippian, settling his big black hat more firmly on his head. "Dangerfield spoke in our town at the state fair last year, and he's one of the best talkers I ever heard."

Therefore, as no one appeared to speak for the governor of South Carolina, the drummer volunteered to vouch for his oratorical gifts, on the strength of an address lately delivered by Governor Osborne in a lecture

course at Cincinnati. Being pressed by the Mississippian, he admitted that he had not himself attended the lecture, but he had heard it warmly praised by competent critics.

The Mississippian had resented Griswold's rejection of the possibility of personal violence between the governors, and wished to return to the subject.

"It's not only themselves," he declared, "but each man has got the honor of his state to defend. Suppose, when they met in the railway office at Atlanta this morning, Dangerfield had drawed his gun. Do you suppose, gentlemen, that if North Carolina had drawed South Carolina wouldn't have followed suit? I declare, young man, you don't know what you're talking about. If Bill Dangerfield won't fight, I don't know fightin' blood when I see it."

"Well, sir," began the Alabama man, "my brother-in-law in Charleston went to college with Osborne, and many's the time I've heard him say that he was sorry for the man who woke up Charlie Osborne. Charlie—I mean the governor, you understand—is one of these fellows who never says much, but when you get him going he's terrible to witness. Bill Dangerfield may be Governor of North Car'line, and I reckon he is, but he

ain't Governor of South Car'line, not by a damned good deal."

The discussion had begun to bore Griswold, and he went back to his own section, having it in mind to revise a lecture he was preparing on *The Right of Search on the High Seas*. It had grown dark, and the car was brilliantly lighted. There were not more than half a dozen other persons in his sleeper, and these were widely scattered. Having taken an inventory of his belongings to be sure they were all at hand, he became conscious of the presence of a young lady in the opposite section. In the seat behind her sat an old colored woman in snowy cap and apron, who was evidently the young lady's servant. Griswold was aware that this dusky duenna bristled and frowned and pursed her lips in the way of her picturesque kind as he glanced at her, as though his presence were an intrusion upon her mistress, who sat withdrawn to the extreme corner of her section, seeking its fullest seclusion, with her head against a pillow, and the tips of her suède shoes showing under her gray traveling skirt on the further half of the section. She twirled idly in her fingers a half-opened white rosebud—a fact unimportant in itself, but destined to linger long in Griswold's memory. The pillow

afforded the happiest possible background for her brown head, her cheek bright with color, and a profile clear-cut, and just now—an impression due, perhaps, to the slight quiver of her nostrils and the compression of her lips—seemingly disdainful of the world. Griswold hung up his hat and opened his portfolio; but the presence of the girl suggested Ardmore and his ridiculous quest of the alluring blue eye, and it was refreshing to recall Ardmore and his ways. Here was one man, at least, in this twentieth century, at whose door the Time Spirit might thump and thunder in vain.

The black woman rose and ministered to her mistress, muttering in kind monotone consolatory phrases from which "chile" and "honey" occasionally reached Griswold's ears. The old mammy produced from a bag several toilet bottles, a fresh handkerchief, a hand mirror and a brush, which she arranged in the empty seat. The silver trinkets glowed brightly against the blue upholstery.

"Thank you, Aunt Phœbe, I'm feeling much better. Just let me alone now, please."

The girl put aside the white rose for a moment and breathed deeply of the vinaigrette, whose keen, pungent odor stole across the aisle to Griswold. She bent for-

ward, took up the hand mirror, and brushed the hair away from her forehead with half a dozen light strokes. She touched her handkerchief to the cologne flask, passed it across her eyes, and then took up the rose again and settled back with a little sigh of relief. In her new upright position her gaze rested upon Griswold's newspapers, which he had flung down on the empty half of his section. One of them had fallen open and lay with its outer page staring with the bold grin of display type.

TWO GOVERNORS AT WAR!

WHAT DID THE GOVERNOR OF NORTH CAROLINA SAY TO THE GOVERNOR OF SOUTH CAROLINA?

The color deepened in the girl's face; a slight frown gathered in her smooth forehead; then she called the colored woman and a brief colloquy followed between them. In a moment Griswold was addressed in a tone and manner at once condescending and deferential.

"If yo' please, suh, would yo' all 'low my mistus t' look at yo' newspapahs?"

"Certainly. Take them along."

And Griswold, recalled from a passage in his lecture that dealt with contraband munitions of war, handed over the newspapers, and saw them pass into the hands

of his fellow-passenger. He had read the newspapers pretty thoroughly, and knew the distribution of their contents, so that he noted with surprise the girl's immediate absorption in the telegrams from New Orleans relating to the difficulty between the two governors.

As she read she lost, he thought, something of her splendid color, and at one point in her reading her face went white for a moment, and Griswold saw the paper wrinkle under the tightening grasp of her hands. The tidings from New Orleans had undoubtedly aroused her indignation, which expressed itself further in the rigid lines of her figure as she read, and in the gradual lifting of her head, as though with some new resolution. She seemed to lose account of her surroundings, and several times Griswold was quite sure that he heard her half exclaim, "Preposterous! Infamous!"

When she had finished the New Orleans telegrams she cast the offending newspapers from her, then, recalling herself, summoned the black woman, and returned them to Griswold, the dusky agent expressing the elaborate thanks of her race for his courtesy. The girl had utterly ignored Griswold, and she now pulled down the curtain at her elbow with a snap and turned her face away from him.

Professor Griswold's eyes wandered repeatedly from his manuscript to the car ceiling, then furtively to the uncompromisingly averted shoulder and head of the young lady, then back to his lecture notes, until he was weary of the process. He wished Ardmore were at hand, for his friend would find here a case that promised much better than the pursuit to which he had addressed himself. The girl in this instance was at least a self-respecting lady, not given to flirtations with chance travelers, and the brown eyes, of which Griswold had caught one or two fleeting glimpses, were clearly not of the winking sort. The attendance of the black mammy distinguished the girl as a person of quality, whose travels were stamped with an austere propriety.

Her silver toilet articles testified to an acquaintance with the comforts if not the luxuries of life. The alligator-hide suit-case thrust under the seat bore the familiar label of a Swiss hotel where Griswold had once spent a week, and spoke of the girl's acquaintance with an ampler world. When Phœbe had brought it forth the initials "B. O." in small black letters suggested Baltimore and Ohio to Griswold's lazy speculations, whereupon he reflected that while Baltimore was plausible, the black servant eliminated Ohio; and as every Vir-

ginian knows every other Virginian, he tried to identify her with Old Dominion family names beginning with O, but without result. He finally concluded that, while her name might be Beatrice or Barbara, it could not be Bessie, and he decided that very likely the suit-case belonged to her brother Benjamin, in whom he felt no interest whatever.

He went out to supper, secured the only remaining table for two, and was giving his order when the young lady appeared. She had donned her hat, and as she stood a moment in the entrance, surveying the line of tables, her distinction was undeniable. There were but two vacant places in the car, one facing Griswold, the other across the aisle at a larger table where three men were engaged in animated discussion. The girl viewed the prospect with evident disappointment as the waiter drew out the vacant chair at Griswold's table. She carried herself bravely, but wore still a *triste* air that touched Griswold's sympathy. He rose, told the waiter that he would sit at the other table, and the girl murmured her thanks with a forlorn little smile as she took his seat.

The appearance of Griswold aroused the Mississippian to a renewal of the discussion of the New Orleans inci-

dent. He was in excellent humor, and had carried to the car a quart bottle, which he pushed toward Griswold:

"As the Governor of North Carolina said to the Governor of South Carolina—"

"No, thank you," and as he spoke Griswold's eyes fell upon the girl, and he saw annoyance written fleetingly on her face.

"You needn't be afraid of that whisky. It's all right," the Mississippian protested.

"I'm confident of that; but some other time, thank you."

"Well, sir," the Mississippian declared, "after you left us a while ago we got to talking about Dangerfield and his trouble with Osborne. There's something back of this rumpus. You see, if they lived in the same state you might account for a fierce rivalry between them. Both of 'em, for example, might have the senatorial bee in their bonnets; but either one of 'em could make the senate any time he pleased. I guess they're the two biggest men in the South right now. They're too big to be touchy about any small matter; that's why I reckon there's something behind this little racket over there at New Orleans. No passing remark would send men off

that way, so wild that they wouldn't travel on the same train together. Why, gentlemen—"

"Please pass the salt," interposed Griswold.

The Mississippian enjoyed the sound of his own voice, which boomed out above the noise of the train with broad effects of dialect that these types will not be asked to reproduce. Griswold's eyes had again met those of the girl opposite, and there was, he felt, a look of appeal in them. The discussion distressed her, just as the telegrams from New Orleans in the afternoon papers had distressed her, and Griswold began at once to entertain his table companions with his views on a number of national political issues, that were as vital to Arizona or Wyoming as to the Carolinas. He told stories to illustrate his points, and told them so well that his three companions forgot the estrangement of the belligerent governors.

Griswold ran on in the low, musical voice that distinguishes the cultivated Virginian in any company anywhere in the world, and the noisy loquacity of the Mississippian went down before him. He was so intent on holding their attention that his dishes were taken from him almost untouched. The others lingered until his coffee was brought. He was so absorbed that he

failed to see the smile that occasionally passed over the girl's face as some fragment of one of his stories found its way to her. He had undertaken to deflect the talk from a channel which had, it seemed, some painful association for her, but he had done more in unwittingly diverting her own thoughts by his droll humor. He did not cease until she had left the car, whereupon he followed his trio of auditors to the smoking compartment, and there suffered the Mississippian to hold uninterrupted sway.

When he went back into the car at eleven o'clock he found the girl and her maid still sitting in their sections, though most of the other berths, including his own, had been made up. The train was slowing down, and, wishing a breath of air before retiring, he went to the rear platform of the sleeper, which was the last car of the train. The porter had opened the door in the vestibule to allow the brakeman to run back with his torpedoes. The baggage car had developed a hot box, and, jumping out, Griswold saw lanterns flashing ahead where the trainmen labored with the sick wheel. The porter vanished, leaving Griswold alone. The train had stopped at the edge of a small town, whose scattered houses lay darkly against the hills beyond. The plat-

form lamps of a station shone a quarter of a mile ahead. The feverish steel yielded reluctantly to treatment, and Griswold went forward and watched the men at work for a few minutes, then returned to the end of the train. He swung himself into the vestibule and leaned upon the guard rail, gazing down the track toward the brakeman's lantern. Then he grew impatient at the continued delay and dropped down again, pacing back and forth in the road-bed behind the becalmed train. The night was overcast, with hints of rain in the air, and a little way from the rear lights it was pitch dark. Griswold felt sure that the train would not leave without the brakeman, and he was further reassured by the lanterns of the trainmen beside the baggage car. Suddenly, as he reached the car and turned to retrace his steps, a man sprang up, seemingly from nowhere, and accosted him.

"I reckon y'u're the gov'nor, ain't y'u?"

"Yes, certainly, my man. What can I do for you?" replied Griswold instantly.

"I reckoned it was y'u when y'u fust come out on the platform. I'm app'inted to tell y'u, Gov'nor, that if y'u have Bill Appleweight arrested in South Car'lina, y'u'll get something one of these days y'u won't

like. And if y'u try to find me y'u'll get it quicker. Good night, Gov'nor."

"Good night!" stammered Griswold.

The least irony had crept into the word governor as the man uttered it and slipped away into the darkness. The shadows swallowed him up; the frogs in the ditch beside the track chanted dolorously; then the locomotive whistled for the brakeman, whose lantern was already bobbing toward the train.

As Griswold swung himself into the vestibule the girl who had borrowed his newspapers turned away hurriedly and walked swiftly before him to her section. The porter, who was gathering her things together, said, as she paused in the aisle by her seat:

"Beginnin' to get ready, Miss Osbo'n. We're gwine intu Columbia thirty minutes late all account dat hot box."

Griswold passed on to the smoking compartment and lighted a cigar. His acquaintances of the supper table had retired, and he was glad to be alone with his thoughts before the train reached Columbia. He dealt harshly with himself for his stupidity in not having associated the girl's perturbation over the breach between the governor of North Carolina and the governor of South

Carolina with the initials on her traveling bag; he had been very dull, but it was clear to him now that she was either the daughter or some other near relative of Governor Osborne. In a few minutes she would leave the train at Columbia, where the governor lived, and, being a gentleman, he would continue on his way to Richmond, and thence to the university, and the incident would be closed. But Griswold was a lawyer, and he had an old-fashioned Southern lawyer's respect for the majesty of law. On the spur of curiosity or impulse he had received a threatening message intended for the governor of South Carolina, who, from the manner of the delivery of the message, had been expected on this train. Griswold argued that the man who had spoken to him had been waiting at the little station near which they had stopped, in the hope of seeing the governor; that the waiting messenger had taken advantage of the unexpected halt of the train, and, further, that some suggestion of the governor in his own appearance had deceived the stranger. He felt the least bit guilty at having deceived the man, but it was now clearly his duty to see that the governor was advised of the threat that had been communicated in so unusual a manner.

He was pondering whether he should do this in per-

son or by letter or telegram, when the rattle of the train over the switch frogs in the Columbia yards brought him to the point of decision.

The porter thrust his head into the compartment.

"Columbia, sah. Yo' berth's all ready, sah. Yo' gwine t' Richmond—yes, sah."

His hands were filled with the young lady's luggage. The lettering on the suit-case seemed, in a way, to appeal to Griswold and to fix his determination.

"Porter! Put my things off. I'll wait here for the morning train."

CHAPTER II

THE ABSENCE OF GOVERNOR OSBORNE

Griswold spent the night at the Saluda House, Columbia, and rose in the morning with every intention of seeing Governor Osborne, or some one in authority at his office, as soon as possible and proceeding to Richmond without further delay. As he scanned the morning newspaper at breakfast he read with chagrin this item, prominently head-lined:

Governor Osborne, who was expected home from the Cotton Planters' Convention yesterday morning has been unavoidably detained in Atlanta by important personal business. Miss Barbara Osborne arrived last night and proceeded at once to the governor's mansion.

Several matters of considerable importance await the governor's return. Among these is the matter of dealing with the notorious Bill Appleweight. It is understood that the North Carolina officials are unwilling to arrest Appleweight, though his hiding-place in the hills on the border near Kildare is well known. Although he runs back and forth across the state line at pleasure, he is a North Carolinian beyond question, and it's about time Governor Dangerfield took note of the fact. However, the governor of South Carolina may be relied on to act with his usual high sense of public duty in this matter.

Professor Griswold was not pleased to learn that the governor was still absent from the capital. He felt that he deserved better luck after the trouble he had taken to warn the governor. His conscience had got the better of his comfort—he knew that, and he wrote a telegram to the law firm at Richmond with which he was consultant, asking that a meeting with certain clients arranged for to-day be deferred twenty-four hours. It was now Tuesday; he had no further lectures at the university until the following Monday, and after he had taken his bearings of Columbia, where it occurred to him he had not an acquaintance, he walked toward the capitol with a well-formed idea of seeing the governor's private secretary—and, if that person appeared to be worthy of confidence, apprising him of the governor's danger.

Standing in the many-pillared portico of the capitol, Griswold turned to look down upon Columbia, a city distinguished to the most casual eye by streets an acre wide! And having an historical imagination and a reverence for the past, Griswold gave himself for a moment to Memory, hearing the tramp of armed hosts, and the thunder of cannon, and seeing flames leap again in the wake of battle. It was a glorious day, and the green of

late May lay like a soft scarf upon the city. The sky held the wistful blue of spring. Griswold bared his head to the faint breeze, or perhaps unconsciously he saluted the bronze figure of Hampton, who rides forever there at the head of his stubborn legion. He turned into the capitol with a little sigh, for he was a son of Virginia, and here, in this unfamiliar scene, the Past was revivified, and he felt the spell of things that were already old when he was born.

It was not yet nine o'clock when he entered the governor's office. He waited in the reception-room, adjoining the official chamber, but the several desks of the clerical staff remained unoccupied. He chafed a bit as time passed and no one appeared, for his north-bound train left at eleven, and he could not fairly be asked to waste the entire day here. He was pacing the floor, expecting one of the clerks to appear at any moment, when a man entered hurriedly, walked to the closed inner door, shook it impatiently, and kicked it angrily as he turned away. He was a short, thick-set man of thirty-five, dressed in blue serge, and his movements were quick and nervous. He growled under his breath and swung round upon Griswold as though to tax him with responsibility for the closed door.

"Has no one been here this morning?" he demanded, glaring at the closed desks.

"If you don't count me I should answer no," replied Griswold quietly.

"Oh!"

The two gentlemen regarded each other for a moment, contemptuous dislike clearly written on the smaller man's face, Griswold half-smiling and indifferent.

"I am waiting for the governor," remarked Griswold, thinking to gain information.

"Then you're likely to wait some time," jerked the other. "The whole place seems to be abandoned. I never saw such a lot of people."

"Not having seen them myself, I must reserve judgment," Griswold remarked, and the blue serge suit flung out of the room.

Presently another figure darkened the entrance, and the colored servant whom Griswold had seen attending Miss Osborne on the train from Atlanta swept into the reception-room and, grandly ignoring his presence, sat down in a chair nearest the closed door of the inner chamber. Griswold felt that this was encouraging, as implying some link between the governor and his domestic household and he was about to ask the colored

woman if she knew the business hours of the office when the closed door opened and Miss Osborne appeared on the threshold. The colored woman rose, and Griswold, who happened to be facing the door when it swung open with such startling suddenness, stared an instant and bowed profoundly.

"I beg your pardon, but I wish very much to see Governor Osborne or his secretary."

Miss Osborne, in white, trailing a white parasol in her hand, and with white roses in her belt, still stood half withdrawn inside the private office.

"I am very sorry that Governor Osborne and his secretary are both absent," she answered, and the two eyed each other gravely. Griswold felt that the brown eyes into which he looked had lately known tears; but she held her head high, with a certain defiance, even.

"That is unfortunate. I stopped here last night on purpose to see him, and now I fear that I must leave—" and he smiled the Griswold smile, which was one of the secrets of his popularity at the university—"I must leave Columbia in a very few minutes."

"The office does not keep very early hours," remarked the girl, "but some one will certainly be here in a moment. I am sorry you have had to wait."

She had not changed her position, and Griswold rather hoped she would not, for the door framed her perfectly, and the sunlight from the inner windows emphasized the whiteness of the snowy gown she wore. Her straw hat was shaped like a soldier's campaign hat, with sides pinned up, the top dented, and a single feather thrust into the side.

"It was not I," said Griswold, "who so rudely shook the door. I beg that you will acquit me of that violence."

The girl did not, however, respond to his smile. She poked the floor with her parasol a moment, then raised her head and asked:

"Who was it, if you please?"

"A gentleman with a brown beard, a red necktie, and a bad disposition."

"I thought as much," she said, half to herself, and her eyes were bent again upon the point of her parasol, with which she was tracing a design in the rug. She lifted her head with the abruptness of quick decision, and looked straight at Griswold. The negress had withdrawn to the outer door, by which she sat with sphinx-like immovability.

"I am Miss Osborne. Governor Osborne is my father.

Would you mind telling me whether your business with my father is—"

She hesitated, and her eyes met Griswold's.

"Miss Osborne, as I have no acquaintances here, let me introduce myself. My name is Griswold. My home is Charlottesville. Pardon me, but you and I were fellow-passengers from Atlanta yesterday evening. I am unacquainted with your father, and I have no business with him except—"

He was not yet clear in his mind whether to tell her that her father's life was threatened; it did not seem fair to alarm her when he was powerless to help; but as he weighed the question the girl came out into the reception-room and sat down near the window.

"Won't you have a seat, Mr. Griswold? May I ask you again whether you know the gentleman who came in here and beat the door a while ago?"

"I never saw him before in my life."

"That is very well. And now, Mr. Griswold, I am going to ask you to tell me, if you will, just what it is you wish to say to my father."

She was very earnest, and the request she made rang the least bit imperiously. She now held the white para-

sol across her lap in the tight clasp of her white-gloved hands.

"I should not hesitate—" began Griswold, still uncertain what to do.

"You need not hesitate in the fear that you may alarm me. I think I know"—and she half-smiled now—"I think perhaps I know what it is."

"My reason for wishing to see your father is, then, to warn him that if a criminal named Appleweight is brought back from his hiding-place on the North Carolina frontier, and tried for his crimes in South Carolina, the governor of that state, your father, will be made to suffer by Appleweight's friends."

"That is what I thought," said the girl, slowly nodding her head.

"And now, to be quite honest about it, Miss Osborne, I must confess that I received this warning last night from a man who believed me to be the governor. To tell the truth, I told him I was the governor!"

The girl's eyes made a fresh inventory of Griswold, then she laughed for the first time—a light laugh of honest mirth that would not be gainsaid. The beautiful color deepened in her cheeks; her eyes lighted merrily,

as though at the drollery of Griswold standing, so to speak, *in loco parentis.*

"I have my own confession to make. I heard what you said to that man. I had gone to the rear platform to see what was the matter. The stop there in that preposterous place seemed interminable. You must have known that I listened."

"I didn't suppose you heard what that man said to me or what I said to him. I don't know how I came to palm myself off as the governor—I am not in the habit of doing such things, but it was due, I think, to the fact that I had just been saying to a friend of mine at Atlanta—"

He ceased speaking, realizing that what he might have said to Ardmore was not germane to the point at issue. His responsibility for the life and security of Governor Osborne of the sovereign state of South Carolina was at an end, and he was entering upon a social chat with Governor Osborne's daughter. Some such thought must have passed through her mind, too, for she straightened herself in her chair and dropped the point of her parasol to the floor. But she was the least bit curious, in spite of herself. The young man before her, who held his hat and gloves so quietly and who

spoke with so nice a deference in a voice so musical, was beyond question a gentleman, and he had stopped at Columbia to render her father a service. There was no reason why she should not hear what he had said to his friend at Atlanta.

"What had you been saying, Mr. Griswold?"

"Oh, really nothing after all! I'm ashamed of it now! But he's the most amusing person, with nothing to do but to keep himself amused. We discuss many daring projects, but we are never equal to them. I had just been telling him that we were incapable of action; that while we plan our battles the foe is already breaking down the outer defenses and beating in the gates. You see, we are both very ridiculous at times, and we talk that sort of idiocy to keep up our spirits. And having berated my friend for his irresolution, I seized the first opportunity to prove my own capacity for meeting emergencies. The man flattered me with the assumption that I was the governor of South Carolina, and I weakly fell."

Distress was again written in Miss Osborne's face. She had paid little heed to the latter half of Griswold's recital, though she kept her eyes fixed gravely upon him. In a moment the gentleman in blue serge who had

manifested so much feeling over the governor's absence strode again into the room.

"Ah, Miss Osborne, so you are back!"

He bowed over the girl's hand with a great deal of manner, then glanced at once toward the door of the private office.

"Hasn't your father come in yet? I have been looking for him since eight o'clock."

"My father is not home yet, Mr. Bosworth."

"Not home! Do you mean to say that he won't be here to-day?"

"I hardly expect him," replied the girl calmly. "Very likely he will be at home to-night or in the morning."

Griswold had walked away out of hearing; but he felt that the girl purposely raised her voice so that he might hear what she said.

"I must know where he is; there's an important matter waiting—a very serious matter it may prove for him if he isn't here to-day to pass on it. I must wire him at once."

"Very good. You had better do so, Mr. Bosworth. He's at the Peach Tree Club, Atlanta."

"Atlanta! Do you mean to say that he isn't even in this state to-day?"

"No, Mr. Bosworth, and I advise you to telegraph him immediately if your business is so urgent."

"It isn't my business, Barbara; it's the state's business; it's your father's business, and if he isn't here to attend to it by to-morrow at the latest, it will go hard with him. He has enemies who will construe his absence as meaning—"

He spoke rapidly, with rising anger, but some gesture from the girl arrested him, and he turned frowningly to see Griswold calmly intent upon an engraving at the further end of the room. The colored woman was dozing in her chair. Before Bosworth could resume, the girl spoke, her voice again raised so that every word reached Griswold.

"If you refer to the Appleweight case, I must tell you, Mr. Bosworth, that I have all confidence that my father will act whenever he sees fit."

"But the people—"

"My father is not afraid of the people," said the girl quietly.

"But you don't understand, Barbara, how much is at stake here. If some action isn't taken in that matter within twenty-four hours your father will be branded as a coward by every newspaper in the state. You seem to

take it pretty coolly, but it won't be a trifling matter for him."

"I believe," replied the girl, rising, "that you have said all that I care to hear from you now or at any further time, Mr. Bosworth, about this or any other matter."

"But, Barbara—"

Miss Osborne turned her back and walked to the window. Bosworth stared a moment, then rushed angrily from the room. Griswold abandoned his study of the picture, and gravely inclined his head as Bosworth passed. Then he waited a minute. The girl still stood at the window, and there was, Griswold felt, something a little forlorn in her figure. It was quite time that he was off if he caught his train for Richmond. He crossed the room, and as he approached the window Miss Osborne turned quickly.

"It was kind of you to wait. That man is the state's attorney-general. You doubtless heard what he said to me."

"Yes, Miss Osborne, I could not help hearing. I did not leave, because I wished to say—"

The associate professor of admiralty in the department of law of the University of Virginia hesitated and was lost. Miss Osborne's eyes were brown, with that

hint of bronze, in certain lights, that is the distinctive possession of the blessed. Health and spirit spoke in her bright color. She was tall and straight, and there was something militant in her figure as she faced Griswold.

"I beg to say, Miss Osborne, that if there is any way in which I can serve you, my time is wholly at your disposal."

"I thank you. I fear that you have already given yourself too much trouble in stopping here. My father will wish to thank you on his return."

Her lips trembled, and tears were bright in her eyes. Then she regained control of herself.

"Mr. Griswold, I have no claim whatever on your kindness, but I am in very great distress. I don't see just where I can turn for aid to any one I know. But you as a stranger may be able to help me—if it isn't asking too much—but then I know it is asking too much!"

"Anything, anything whatever," urged Griswold kindly.

"Mr. Bosworth, the attorney-general, warns me that if my father does not use the power of the state to capture this outlaw Appleweight, the results will be dis-

astrous. He says my father must act immediately. He demanded his address, and, and—I gave it to him."

"But you must remember, Miss Osborne, that the attorney-general probably knows the intricacies of this case. He must have every reason for upholding your father; in fact, it's his sworn duty to advise him in such matters as this."

"There's another side to that, Mr. Griswold," and the girl's color deepened; but she smiled and went on. It was quite evident that she was animated now by some purpose, and that she was resolved to avail herself of Griswold's proffered aid. "I have my own reasons for doubting Mr. Bosworth's motives; and I resent his assumption that my father is not doing his full duty. No one can speak to me of my father in that way—no one!"

"Certainly not, Miss Osborne!"

"This whole matter must be kept as quiet as possible. I can appeal to no one here without the risk of newspaper publicity which would do my father very great injury. But if it is not altogether too great a favor, Mr. Griswold, may I ask that you remain here until to-night—until my father returns? His secretary has been ill and is away from town. The other clerks I sent away on purpose this morning. Father had left his

office keys at home, and I came in to see if I could find the papers in the Appleweight case. They are there, and on the top of the packet is a requisition on the governor of North Carolina for Appleweight's return."

"Signed?"

"Signed. I'm sure he had only deferred acting in the case until his return, and he should have been back today."

"But of course he will be back; it is inconceivable that he should ignore, much less evade, a duty as plain as this—the governor of a state—it is preposterous! His business in Atlanta accounts for his absence. Governor Osborne undoubtedly knows what he is about."

"My father is not in Atlanta, Mr. Griswold. He is not at the Peach Tree Club, and has not been. I have not the slightest idea where my father is!"

The echoing whistle of the departing Virginia express reached them faintly as they stood facing each other before the open window in the governor's reception-room.

CHAPTER III

THE JUG AND MR. ARDMORE

Mr. Thomas Ardmore, of New York and Ardsley, having seen his friend Griswold depart, sought a book-shop where, as in many other book-shops throughout the United States, he kept a standing order for any works touching piracy, a subject, which, as already hinted, had long afforded him infinite diversion. He had several hours to wait for his train to New Orleans, and he was delighted to find that the bookseller, whom he had known only by correspondence, had just procured for him, through the dispersion of a Georgia planter's valuable library, that exceedingly rare narrative, *The Golden Galleons of the Caribbean,* by Dominguez y Pascual—a beautifully bound copy of the original Madrid edition.

With this volume under his arm Ardmore returned to the hotel where he was lodged and completed his arrangements for leaving. It should be known that Mr. Thomas Ardmore was a person of democratic tastes and

habits. In his New York house were two servants whose sole business it was to keep himself and his wardrobe presentable; yet he preferred to travel unattended. He was, by nature, somewhat secretive, and his adventurous spirit rebelled at the thought of being followed about by a hired retainer. His very wealth was, in a way, a nuisance, for wherever he went the newspapers chronicled his movements, with speculations as to the object of his visit, and dark hints at large public gifts which the city honored by his presence at once imagined would be bestowed upon it forthwith. The American press constantly execrated his family, and as he was sensitive to criticism he kept very much to himself.

It was a matter of deep regret to Ardmore that his great-grandfather, whose name he bore, should have trifled with the morals of the red men, but he philosophized that it was not his fault, and if he had known how to squeeze the whisky from the Ardmore millions he would have been glad to do so. His own affairs were managed by the Bronx Loan and Trust Company, and Ardmore took little personal interest in any of his belongings except his estate in North Carolina, where he dreamed his dreams, and had, on the whole, a pretty good time.

When he had finished packing his trunk he went down to the dinner he had ordered to be in readiness at a certain hour, at a certain table, carefully chosen beforehand; for Ardmore was very exacting in such matters and had an eye to the comforts of life, as he understood them.

As he crossed the hotel lobby on his way to the restaurant he was accosted by a reporter for the Atlanta *Palladium,* who began to question him touching various Ardmores who were just then filling rather more than their usual amount of space in the newspapers. Ardmore's family, with the single exception of his sister, Mrs. Atchison, bored him immensely. His two brothers and another sister, the Duchess of Ballywinkle, kept the family name in display type a great deal of the time, and their performances had practically driven Thomas Ardmore from New York. He felt keenly his shame in being brother-in-law to a dissolute duke, and the threatened marriage of one of his brothers to a chorus girl had added, he felt, all too great a burden to a family tree whose roots, he could not forget it, were soaked in contraband rum. The reporter was a well-mannered youth and Ardmore shook his hand encouragingly. He was rather curious to see what new incident in the family

history was to be the subject of inquisition, and the reporter immediately set his mind at rest.

"Pardon me, Mr. Ardmore, but is it true that your sister, the Duchess of Ballywinkle, has separated from the duke?"

"You may quote me as saying that while I am not quite sure, yet I sincerely hope the reports are true. To be frank with you, I do not like the duke; in fact, strictly between ourselves, I disliked him from the first," and Ardmore shook his head gravely, and meditatively jingled the little gold pieces that he always carried in his trousers pockets.

"Well, of course, I had heard that there was some trouble between you and your brother-in-law, but can't the *Palladium* have your own exact statement, Mr. Ardmore, of what caused the breach between you?"

Ardmore hesitated and turned his head cautiously.

"You understand, of course, that this discussion is painful to me, extremely painful. And yet, so much has been published about my sister's domestic affairs—"

"Exactly, Mr. Ardmore. What we want is to print *your* side of the story."

"Very decent of you, I'm sure. But the fact is—" and Ardmore glanced over his shoulder again to be sure

he was not overheard—"the fact is—" and he paused, batting his eyes as though hesitating at the point of an important disclosure.

"Yes, Mr. Ardmore," encouraged the reporter.

"Well, I don't mind telling *you,* but don't print this. Let it be just between ourselves."

"Oh, of course, if you say not—"

"That's all right; I have every confidence in your discretion; but, if this will go no further, I don't mind telling you—"

"You may rely on me absolutely, Mr. Ardmore."

"Then, with the distinct understanding that this is *sub rosa*—now we *do* understand each other, don't we?" pleaded Ardmore.

"Perfectly, Mr. Ardmore," and the perspiration began to bead the reporter's forehead in his excitement over the impending revelation.

"Then you shall know why I feel so bitter about the duke. I assure you that nothing but the deepest chagrin over the matter causes me to tell you what I have never revealed before—not even to members of my family—not to my most intimate friend."

"I appreciate all that—"

"Well, the fact is—but please never mention it—the

fact is that his Grace owes me four dollars. I gave it to him in two bills—I remember the incident perfectly—two crisp new bills I had just got at the bank. His Grace borrowed the money to pay a cabman—it was the very day before he married my sister. Now let me ask you this: Can an American citizen allow a duke to owe him four dollars? The villain never referred to the matter again, and from that day to this I have made it a rule never to lend money to a duke."

The reporter stared a moment, then laughed. He abandoned the idea of getting material for a sensational article and scented the possibilities of a character sketch of the whimsical young millionaire.

"How about that story that your brother, Samuel Ardmore, is going to marry the chorus girl he ran over in his automobile?"

"I hope it's true; I devoutly do. I'm very fond of music myself, and, strange to say, nobody in our family is musical. I think a chorus girl would be a real addition to our family. It would bring up the family dignity—you can see that."

"The wires brought a story this afternoon that your cousin, Wingate Siddall—he *is* your cousin, isn't he—?"

"I'm afraid so. What's Siddy's latest?"

"Why, it's reported that he's going to cross the Atlantic in a balloon. Can you tell us anything about that from the inside?"

"Well, the ocean is only four miles deep; I'd take more interest in Cousin Siddy's ballooning if you could make it a couple of miles more to the dead men's chests. And now, much as I'd like to prolong this conversation, I've got to eat or I'll miss my train."

"If you don't mind saying where you are going, Mr. Ardmore?"

"I'd tell you in a minute, only I haven't fully decided yet; but I shall probably take the Sambo Flyer at 9:13, if you don't make me lose it."

"You have large interests in Arkansas, I believe, Mr. Ardmore?"

"Yes; important interests. I'm searching for the original fiddle of the Arkansaw Traveler. When I find it I'm going to give it to the British Museum. And now you really must excuse me."

Ardmore looked the reporter over carefully as they shook hands. He was an attractive young fellow, alert and good humored, and Ardmore liked him, as, in his shy way, he really liked almost every one who seemed to be a human being.

"I'll tell you what I'll do with you. If you'll forget this rot we've been talking and come up to Ardsley as soon as I get home, I'll see if I can't keep you amused for a couple of weeks. I don't offer that as a bribe; my family affairs are of interest to nobody but hostlers and kitchen maids. Wire me at Ardsley when you're ready, throw away your lead-pencil, then come on and I'll show you the finest collection of books on Captain Kidd in the known world. What did you say your name is? Collins, Frank Collins? I never forget anything, so don't disappoint me."

"That's mighty nice of you, but I don't have much time for vacations," replied the reporter, who was, however, clearly pleased.

"If the office won't give you a couple of weeks, wire me and I'll buy the paper."

The young man laughed outright.

"I'll remember; I really believe you mean for me to come."

"Of course I do. It's all settled; make it next week. Good-by!"

Ardmore ate his dinner oblivious of the fact that people at the neighboring tables turned to look at him. He overheard his name mentioned, and a woman just behind

him let it be known to her companions and any one else who cared to hear that he was the brother-in-law of the Duke of Ballywinkle. Another voice in the neighborhood kindly remarked that Ardmore was the only decent member of the family, and that he was not the one whose wife had just left him, nor yet the one who was going to marry the chorus girl whose father kept a delicatessen shop in Hoboken. It is very sad to be unable to dine without having family skeletons joggle one's elbow, and Ardmore was annoyed. The head waiter hung officiously near; the man who served him was distressingly eager; and then the voice behind him rose insistently:

"—worth millions and yet he can't find anybody to eat with him."

This was almost true and a shadow passed across Ardmore's face and his eyes grew grave as he humbly reflected that he was indeed a pitiable object. He waved away his plate and called for coffee, and at that moment a middle-aged man appeared at the door, scanned the room for a moment and then threaded his way among the tables to Ardmore.

"I heard you were here and thought I'd look you up. How are you, Ardy?"

"Very well, thank you, Mr. Billings. Have you dined? Sorry; which way are you heading?"

The new-comer had the bearing of a gentleman used to consideration. He was, indeed, the secretary of the Bronx Loan and Trust Company, whose business was chiefly the administration of the Ardmore estate, and Ardmore knew him very well. He was afraid that Billings had traced him to Atlanta for one of those business discussions which always vexed and perplexed him so grievously, and the thought of this further depressed his spirits. But the secretary at once eased his mind.

"I'm looking for a man, and I'm not good at the business. I've lost him and I don't understand it, I don't understand it," and the secretary seemed to be half-musing to himself as he sat down and rested his arms on the table.

"You might give me the job. I'm following a slight clue myself just at present."

The secretary, who had no great opinion of Ardmore's mental capacity, stared at the young man vacantly. Then it occurred to him that possibly Ardmore might be of service.

"Have you been at Ardsley recently?" he asked.

"Left there only a few days ago."

"You haven't seen your governor lately, have you?"

"My governor?" Ardmore stared blankly. "Why, Mr. Billings, don't you remember that father's dead?"

"I don't mean your father, Ardy," replied Billings with the exaggerated care of one who deals with extreme stupidity. "I mean the governor of North Carolina—one of the American states. Ardsley is still in North Carolina, isn't it?"

"Oh, yes; of course. But bless your soul, I don't know the governor. Why should one?"

"I don't know why, Ardy; but people sometimes do know governors and find it useful."

"I'm not in politics any more, Mr. Billings. What's this person's name?"

"Dangerfield. Don't you ever read the newspapers?" demanded the secretary, striving to control his inner rage. He was in trouble and Ardmore's opaqueness taxed his patience. And yet Tommy Ardmore had given him less trouble than any other member of the Ardmore family. The others galloped gaily through their incomes; Tommy was rapidly augmenting his inheritance from sheer neglect or inability to scatter his dividends.

"No; I quit reading newspapers after the noble

Duke of Ballywinkle didn't break the bank at Monte Carlo that last time. I often wish, Mr. Billings, that the Mohawks had scalped my great-grandfather before they bought his whisky. That would have saved me the personal humiliation of being brother-in-law to a duke."

"You mustn't be so thin-skinned. You pay the penalty of belonging to one of the wealthiest families in America," and Billings' tone was paternal.

"So I've heard, but I'm not so terribly proud of it. What about this governor?"

"That's what troubles me—what of the governor?" Billings dropped his voice so that no one but Ardmore could hear. "He's missing—disappeared."

"That's the first interesting thing I ever heard of a governor doing," said Ardmore. "Tell me more."

"He's had a row with the governor of South Carolina at New Orleans. I was to have met him here on an important matter of business this afternoon, but he's cleared out and nobody knows what's become of him. His daughter, even, who was in New Orleans with him, doesn't know where he is."

"When was she in New Orleans with him?" asked Ardmore, looking at his watch.

"She—who?" asked Billings, annoyed.

"Why, the daughter!"

"I don't know anything about the daughter, but if I could find her father I'd give him a piece of my mind," and the secretary's face flushed angrily.

"Well, I suppose she isn't the one I'm looking for, anyhow," said Ardmore resignedly.

"I should hope not," blurted Billings, who had not really taken in what Ardmore said, but who assumed that it must necessarily be something idiotic.

"She had fluffy hair," persisted Ardmore to this serious-minded gentleman whose life was devoted to the multiplication of the Ardmore millions. Ardmore's tone was that of a child who persists in babbling inanities to a distracted parent.

"Better let girls alone, Tommy. Mrs. Atchison told me you were going to marry Daisy Waters, and I should heartily approve the match."

"Did Nellie tell you that? I wonder if she's told Daisy yet? You'll have to excuse me now, for I'm taking the Sambo Flyer. I'd like to find your governor for you; and if you'll tell me when he was seen last—"

"Right here, just before noon to-day, and a couple of hours before I reached town. His daughter either doesn't know where he went or she won't tell."

"Ah! the daughter! She remains behind to guard his retreat."

"The daughter is still here. She's a peppery little piece," and Billings looked guardedly around the room. "That's she, alone over there in the corner—the girl with the white feather in her hat who's just signing her check. There—she's getting up!"

Ardmore gazed across the room intently, then suddenly a slight smile played about his lips. To gain the door the girl must pass by his table, and he scrutinized her closely as she drew near and passed. She was a little girl, and her light fluffy hair swept out from under a small blue hat in a shell-like curve, and the short skirt of her tailor-made gown robbed her, it seemed, of years to which the calendar might entitle her.

"She gave me the steadiest eye I ever looked into when I asked her where her father had gone," remarked Billings grimly as the girl passed. "She said she thought he'd gone fishing for whales."

"So she's Miss Dangerfield, is she?" asked Ardmore indifferently; and he rose, leaving on the plate, by a sudden impulse of good feeling toward the world, exactly double the generous tip he had intended giving. Billings was glad to be rid of Ardmore and they parted in the

hotel lobby without waste of words. The secretary of the Bronx Loan and Trust Company announced his intention of remaining another day in Atlanta in the hope of finding Governor Dangerfield, and he was so absorbed in his own affairs that he did not heed, if indeed he heard, Ardmore's promise to keep an eye out for the lost governor. Like most other people the secretary of the Bronx Loan and Trust Company did not understand Ardmore, but Thomas Ardmore, having long ago found himself ill-judged by the careless world, lived by standards of his own, and these would have meant nothing whatever to Billings.

Ardmore's effects had been brought down and were already piled on a carriage at the door. In his pocket was his passage to New Orleans and a state-room ticket. At the cashier's desk Miss Dangerfield paid her bill, just ahead of him.

"If any telegrams come for my father please forward them to Raleigh," said the girl. The manager came out personally to show her to her carriage, and having shut the door upon her, he wished Ardmore, who stood discreetly by, a safe journey.

"Off for New Orleans, are you, Mr. Ardmore?" asked the manager courteously.

"No," said Ardmore, "I'm going to Raleigh to look at the tall buildings," whereat the manager returned to his duties, gravely shaking his head.

At the station Ardmore caught sight of Miss Dangerfield, attended by two porters, hurrying toward the Tar Heel Express. He bought a ticket to Raleigh, and secured the last available berth from the conductor on the platform at the moment of departure.

Ardmore did not like to be hurried, and this sudden change of plans had been almost too much for him, but he was consoled by the reflection that after all these years of waiting for just such an adventure he had proved himself equal to an emergency that required quick thought and swift action. He had not only found the girl with the playful eye, but he had learned her identity without, as it were, turning over his hand. Not even Griswold, who was the greatest man he knew—Griswold with his acute legal mind and ability to carry through contests of wit with lawyers of highest repute—not even Griswold, Ardmore flattered himself, could have managed better.

The state-room door stood open, and from his seat at the farther end of the car Ardmore caught a fleeting glimpse of Miss Dangerfield as she threw off her jacket

and hat; then she summoned the porter, gave him her tickets, bade him a smiling good night and the door closed upon her. The broad grin on the porter's face—a grin of delight as though he had spoken with some exalted deity—filled Ardmore with bitterest envy.

He went back to smoke and plan his future movements. For the first time in his life he faced to-morrow with eager anticipations, resolved that nothing should thwart his high resolves, though these, to be sure, were somewhat hazy. Then, from a feeling of great satisfaction, his spirit reacted and he regretted that he had been deprived of the joy of prolonged search. If he could only have followed her until, at the last moment, when about to give up forever and accept the frugal consolations of memory, he met her somewhere face to face! These reflections led him to wonder whether he might not have been mistaken about the wink after all. Griswold, with his wider knowledge of the world, had scouted the idea. Very likely if one of those blue eyes had actually winked at him it had been out of mere playfulness, and he would never in the world refer to it when they met. Billings had applied the term peppery to her, and he felt that he should always hate Billings for this; Billings was only a financial automaton anyhow, who

bought at the lowest and sold at the highest, and bored one very often with strangely-worded papers which one was never expected to understand. He did not know why Billings was so anxious to find Miss Dangerfield's father, but as between a man of Billings' purely commercial instincts and the governor of a great state like North Carolina Ardmore resolved to stand by the Dangerfields to the end of the chapter. He was proud to remember his estate at Ardsley, which was in Governor Dangerfield's jurisdiction, and had been visited by the game warden, the state forester, and various other members of the governor's official household, though Ardmore could not remember their names. He had never in his life visited Raleigh, but far down some dim vista of memory he saw Sir Walter covering a mud-puddle with his cloak for Queen Elizabeth. It was a picture of this moving incident in an old history that rose before him, as he tried vainly to recall just how it was that Sir Walter had lost his head. He wondered whether Miss Dangerfield's name was Elizabeth, though he hoped not, as the name suggested a town in New Jersey where his motor had once broken down on a rainy evening when he was carrying Griswold to Princeton to deliver a lecture.

Ardmore smoked many pipes and did not turn in until after midnight. The car was hot and stuffy and he slept badly. At some hour of the morning, being again awake and restless, he fished his dressing-gown and slippers out of his bag and went out on the rear platform. His was the last car, and he found a camp-stool and crouched down upon it in a corner of the vestibule and stared out into the dark. The hum and click of the rails soothed him and he yielded himself to pleasant reveries. Griswold was well on his way back to Virginia, he remembered—"dear old Grissy!" he murmured; but he resolved to tell Griswold nothing of the prosperous course of his quest. Griswold would never, he knew, countenance so grave a performance as the following of a strange girl to her home; but this would be something for later justification.

Ardmore was half-dozing when the train stopped so abruptly that he was pitched from the camp-stool into a corner of the entry. He got himself together and leaned out into the cool moist air.

The porter came out and stared, for a gentleman in a blue silk wrapper who sat up all night in a vestibule was new to his experience.

"What place is this, porter?"

"Kildare, sah. This place is wha' we go from South C'lina into N'oth C'lina. Ain't yo' be'th comfor'ble, sah?"

"Perfectly; thank you."

Kildare was a familiar name, and the station, that lay at the outskirts of the town, and a long grim barracks-like building that he identified as a cotton mill, recalled the fact that he was not far from his own ample acres which lay off somewhere to westward. He had occasionally taken this route from the north in going to Ardsley, riding or driving from Kildare about ten miles to his house. In this way he was enabled to go or come without appearing at all in the little village of Ardsley.

The porter left him. He felt ready for sleep now, and resolved to go back to bed as soon as the train started. Just then a dark shadow appeared in the track and a man's voice asked cautiously:

"Air y'u the conductor?"

The questioner saw that he was not, before Ardmore could reply, and hesitated a moment.

"The porter's in the car; you can get aboard up forward," Ardmore suggested.

"Be Gov'nor Dangerfield on this train?" asked the

man, whom Ardmore now saw dimly outlined in the track below.

"Certainly, my friend. The governor's asleep, but I'm his private secretary. What can I do for you?"

"Well, hyeh's somethin' fer 'im—it's confidential. Sure, air ye, th' gov'nor's in they?"

The man—a tall bearded countryman in a slouch hat, handed up to Ardmore a jug—a plain, brown, old-fashioned American gallon jug.

"It's a present fer Gov'nor Dangerfield. He'll understand," and the man vanished as mysteriously as he had appeared, leaving Ardmore holding the jug by its handle, and feeling a little dazed by the transaction.

The train lingered, and Ardmore was speculating as to which one of the Carolina commonwealths was beneath him, when another figure appeared below in the track—that of a bareheaded, tousled boy this time. He stared up at Ardmore sleepily, having apparently been roused on the arrival of the train.

"Air y'u the gov'nor?" he piped.

"Yes, my lad; in what way can I serve you?" and Ardmore put down his jug and leaned over the guard rail. It was just as easy to be the governor as the governor's private secretary, and his vanity was touched by

the readiness with which the boy accepted him in his new rôle. His costume, vaguely discernible in the vestibule light, evidently struck the lad as being some amazing robe of state affected by governors. The youngster was lifting something, and he now held up to Ardmore a jug, as like the other as one pea resembles another.

"Pa ain't home and ma says hyeh's yer jug o' buttermilk."

"Thank you, my lad. While I regret missing your worthy father, yet I beg to present my compliments to your kind and thoughtful mother."

He had transferred his money to his dressing-gown pocket on leaving his berth, and he now tossed a silver dollar to the boy, who caught it with a yell of delight and scampered off into the night.

Ardmore had dropped the jugs carelessly into the vestibule, and he was surveying them critically when the train started. The wheels were beginning to grind reluctantly when a cry down the track arrested his attention. A man was flying after the train, shouting at the top of his lungs. He ran, caught hold of the rail and howled:

"The gov'nor ain't on they! Gimme back my jug."

"Indian-giver!" yelled Ardmore. He stooped down, picked up the first jug that came to hand, and dropped it into the man's outstretched arms.

The porter, having heard voices, rushed out upon Ardmore, who held the remaining jug to the light, scrutinizing it carefully.

"Please put this away for me, porter. It's a little gift from an old army friend."

Then Mr. Ardmore returned to his berth, fully pleased with his adventures, and slept until the porter gave warning of Raleigh.

CHAPTER IV

DUTY AND THE JUG

Mr. Thomas Ardmore, one trunk, two bags, and a little brown jug reached the Guilford House, Raleigh, at eight o'clock in the morning. Ardmore had never felt better in his life, he assured himself, as he chose a room with care and intimated to the landlord his intention of remaining a week. But for the ill luck of having his baggage marked he should have registered himself falsely on the books of the inn; but feeling that this was not quite respectable he assured the landlord, in response to the usual question, that he was not Ardmore of New York and Ardsley but an entirely different person.

"Well, I don't blame you for not wanting to be taken for any of that set," remarked the landlord sympathetically.

"I should think not!" returned Ardmore in a tone of deep disgust.

The Guilford House coffee was not just what he was used to, but he was in an amiable humor and enjoyed hugely the conversation of the commercial travelers with whom he took his breakfast. He did not often escape from himself or the burden of his family reputation, and these strangers were profoundly entertaining. It had never occurred to Ardmore that man could be so amiable so early in the day and his own spirits rallied as he passed the sugar, abused the hot bread and nodded his approval of bitter flings at the inns of other southern towns of whose existence he only vaguely knew. They spoke of the president of the United States and of various old world monarchs in a familiar tone that was decidedly novel and refreshing; and he felt that it was a great privilege to sit at meat with these blithe spirits. Commercial travelers, he now realized, were more like the strolling players, the wandering knights, the cloaked riders approaching lonely inns at night, than any other beings he had met out of books. It was with the severest self-denial that he resisted an impulse to invite them all to visit him at Ardsley or to use his house in Fifth Avenue whenever they pleased. When the man nearest him, who was having a second plate of corn cakes and syrup, casually inquired his "line," Ard-

more experienced a moment of real shame, but remembering the jug he had acquired in the night he replied:

"Crockery."

"Mine's drugs. Do you know Billy Gallop?—he's in your line."

"Should say I did," replied Ardmore unhesitatingly. "I took supper with him in Philadelphia Sunday night."

"How's trade?"

"Bully," replied Ardmore, reaching for the syrup, "I broke my record yesterday."

The drug man turned to listen to a discussion of the row between Governors Osborne and Dangerfield precipitated by one of the company who had fortified himself with a newspaper, and Ardmore also gave ear.

"Whatever did happen at New Orleans," declared a Maiden Lane jewelry representative, "you can be quite sure that Dangerfield won't get the hot end of the poker. I've seen him, right here at Raleigh, and he has all the marks of a fighting man. He'd strip at two hundred, and he's six in his socks."

"Pshaw! Those big fellows are all meat and no muscle," retorted the drug man. "I doubt if there's any fight in him. Now Osborne's a different product—a tall lean cuss, but active as a cat. A man to be governor of South

Carolina has got to have the real stuff in him. If it comes to a show-down you'll see Dangerfield duck and run."

This discussion was continued at length, greatly to Ardmore's delight, for he felt that in this way he was being brought at once into touch with Miss Dangerfield, now domiciled somewhere in this town, and to whom he expected to be properly introduced just as soon as he could devise some means to that end. As he had not read the newspapers he did not know what the row was all about, but he instinctively aligned himself on the Dangerfield side. The Osbornes were, he felt, an inferior race, and he inwardly resented the imputations upon Governor Dangerfield's courage.

"I wonder if the governor's back yet?" asked one man.

"The morning paper says not, but he's expected to-day," replied the man with the newspaper.

"About the first thing he'll have to do will be to face the question of arresting Appleweight. I was in Columbia the other day and everybody was talking of the case. They say"—and the speaker waited for the fullest attention of his hearers—"they say Osborne ain't none too anxious to have Appleweight arrested on his side of the line."

"Why not?" demanded Ardmore.

"Well, you hear all kinds of things. It was only whispered down there, but they say Osborne was a little too thick with the Appleweight crowd before he was elected governor. He was their attorney, and they were a bad lot for any man to be attorney for. But they haven't caught Appleweight yet."

"Where's he hiding; don't the authorities know?"

"Oh, he's up there in the hills on the state line. His home is as much on one side as the other. He spends a good deal of time in Kildare."

"Kildare?" asked Ardmore, startled at the word.

"Yes, it's the county seat, what there is of it. I hope you never make that town!" and the inquirer bent a commiserating glance upon Ardmore.

"Well, they use jugs there, I know that!" declared Ardmore; whereat the table roared. The unanimity of their applause warmed his heart, though he did not know why they laughed.

"You handle crockery?" asked a man from the end of the table. "Well, I guess Dilwell County consumes a few gross of jugs all right. But you'd better be careful not to whisper jugs too loud here. There's usually a couple of revenue men around town."

They all went together to the office, where they picked up their sample cases and sallied forth for a descent upon the Raleigh merchants; and Ardmore, thus reminded that he was in the crockery business, and that he had a sample in his room, sat down under a tree on the sidewalk at the inn door to consider what he should do with his little brown jug. It had undoubtedly been intended for Governor Dangerfield, who was supposed to be on the train he had himself taken from Atlanta to Raleigh. There had been, in fact, two jugs, but one of them he had tossed back into the hands of the man who had pursued the train at Kildare. Ardmore smoked his pipe and meditated, trying to determine which jug he had tossed back; and after long deliberation, he slapped his knee, and said aloud:

"I gave him the wrong one, by jing!"

The boy had said that his offering contained buttermilk, a beverage which Ardmore knew was affected by eccentric people for their stomach's sake. He had sniffed the other jug and it contained, undeniably, an alcoholic liquid of some sort.

Jugs had not figured prominently in Ardmore's domestic experiences; but as he sat under the tree on the curb before the Guilford House he wondered, as many

other philosophers have wondered, why a jug is so incapable of innocency! A bottle, while suggestive, is not inherently wicked; but a jug is the symbol of joyous sin. Even the soberest souls, who frown at the mention of a bottle, smile tolerantly when a jug is suggested. Jugs of many centuries are assembled in museums, and round them the ethnologist reconstructs extinct races of men; and yet, even science and history, strive they never so sadly, can not wholly relieve the jug of its cheery insouciance. A bottle of inferior liquor may be dressed forth enticingly, and alluringly named; but there's no disguising the jug; its genial shame can not be hidden. There are pleasant places in America where, if one deposit a half-dollar and a little brown jug behind a certain stone, or on the shady side of a blackberry bush, jug and coin will together disappear between sunset and sunrise; but lo! the jug, filled and plugged with a corn-cob, will return alone mysteriously, in contravention of the statutes in such cases made and provided. Too rare for glass, this fluid, which bubbles out of the southern hills with as little guilt in its soul as the brooks beside which it comes into being! But, lest he be accused of aiding and abetting crime against the majesty of the law, this chronicler hastens to say that

on a hot day in the harvest field, honest water, hidden away in a little brown jug in the fence corner, acquires a quality and imparts a delight that no mug of crystal or of gold can yield.

As Mr. Ardmore pondered duty and the jug a tall man in shabby corduroy halted near by and inspected him carefully. Mr. Ardmore, hard upon his pipe, had not noticed him, somewhat, it seemed, to the stranger's vexation. He patrolled the sidewalk before the inn, hoping to attract Ardmore's attention, but finding that the young man's absorption continued he presently dropped into a neighboring chair under the maple tree.

"Good morning," said Ardmore pleasantly.

The man nodded, but did not speak. He was examining Ardmore with a pair of small, shrewd, gray eyes. In his hands he held a crumpled bit of brown paper that looked like a telegram.

"Well, I reckon you jest got to town this mornin', young fella."

"Yes, certainly;" Ardmore replied promptly. He had never been addressed in quite this fashion before, but it was all in keeping with his new destiny and he was immediately interested in the stranger, who was well on in middle age, with a rough grizzled beard, and a

soft hat, once black, that now struggled for a compromise tint between yellow and green.

"Ever been hyeh befo'?"

"Never; but I'm crazy about the place and I'll be seen here a good deal hereafter."

Ardmore produced his cigar-case and extended it to the stranger. The man, awed by the splendor of the case, accepted a cigar a little gingerly.

"Drummer, I reckon?"

"Commercial traveler, we prefer to be designated," replied Ardmore with dignity.

"I guess drummer's good enough down hyeh. What y'u carry?"

"Jugs. I'm in the jug business. Never had any business but jugs."

The man paused in lighting his cigar, stared at Ardmore over the flaming match, drew the fire into the cigar several times, then settled back with his hands in his pockets.

"Full 'r empty?"

"The jugs? Oh, empty jugs; but it's no affair of mine what becomes of the jugs afterwards."

"Y'u likely got samples with y'u?"

"Well, not many. You see my line is so well known

I don't have to carry samples any more. The trade knows our goods."

"Stop at Kildare on the way up?" and the stranger looked about guardedly.

"Certainly, my friend, I always 'make' Kildare," replied Ardmore, using a phrase he had acquired at breakfast.

"Train runs through the' pretty late at night?"

"Beastly. But I hardly ever sleep, anyhow. A man in my splendid health doesn't need sleep. It's a rotten waste of time."

Silence for several minutes; then the stranger leaned forward in his chair, resting his elbows on his knees, and said in a low tone:

"I got a telegram hyeh says y'u got a jug thet y'u ain't no right t' last night at Kildare. I want thet jug, young fella."

"Now that's very unfortunate. Ordinarily I should be delighted, but I really couldn't give away my Kildare jug. Now if it was one of my other jugs—even my Omaha jug, or my dear old Louisville jug—I shouldn't hesitate a minute, but that old Kildare jug! My dear man, you don't know what you ask!"

"Y'll give me thet jug or it'll be the worse for y'u. Y'u ain't in thet game, young fella."

"Not in it! You don't know whom you are addressing. I'm not only in the game, but I'm in to the finish," declared Ardmore, sitting upright in his chair. "You've got the wrong idea, my friend, if you think you can intimidate me. That jug was given me by a friend, a very old and dear friend—"

"A friend of yourn!"

The keen little gray eyes were blinking rapidly.

"One of the best friends I ever had in this world," and Ardmore's face showed feeling. "He and I charged side by side through the bloodiest battles of our Civil War. I will cheerfully give you my watch, or money in any sum, but the jug—I will part with my life first! And now," concluded Ardmore, "while I should be glad to continue this conversation, my duties call me elsewhere."

As he rose, the man stood quickly at his side, menacingly.

"Give me thet jug or I'll shoot y'u right hyeh in the street."

"No, you wouldn't do that, Old Corduroy. I can see

that you are kind and good and you wouldn't shoot down an unarmed man. Besides it would muss up the street."

"Y'u took thet jug from my brother by lyin' to 'im. He's telegraphed me to git it, and I'm a-goin' to do it."

"Your brother sent you? It was nice of him to ask you to call on me. Why, I've known your brother intimately for years."

"Knowed my brother?" and for the first time the man really seemed to doubt himself. "Wheh did y'u know Bill?"

"We roomed together at Harvard, that's how I know him, if you force me to it! We're both Hasty Pudding men. Now if you try to bulldoze me further, I'll slap your wrists. So there!"

Ardmore entered the hotel deliberately, climbed to his room and locked the door. Then he seized the little brown jug, drew the stopper and poured out a tumblerful of clear white fluid. He took a swallow and shuddered as the fiery liquid seemed instantly to cause every part of his being to tingle. He wiped the tears from his eyes and sat down. The corn-cob stopper had fallen to the floor, and he picked it up and examined it carefully. It had been fitted tightly into the mouth of the jug by the addition of a bit of calico, and he fingered

it for a moment with a grin on his face. He was, considering his tranquil past, making history rapidly, and he wished that Griswold, whom he imagined safely away on his law business at Richmond, could see him now, embarked upon a serious adventure, that had already brought him into collision with a seemingly sane man who had threatened him with death. Griswold had been quite right about their woeful incapacity for rising to emergencies, but the episode of the jugs at Kildare was exactly the sort of thing they had discussed time and time again, and it promised well. His throat was raw, as though burned with acid, and it occurred to him for an anxious moment that perhaps he had imbibed a poison intended for the governor.

He was about to replace the cob stopper when, to his astonishment, it broke in his fingers, and out fell a carefully folded slip of paper. He carried it to the window and opened it, finding that it was an ordinary telegraph blank on which was written in clear round characters these words:

The Appleweight crowd never done you harm. If you have any of them arrested you will be shot down on your own doorstep.

When Mr. Thomas Ardmore had read this message

half a dozen times with increasing satisfaction he folded it carefully and put it away in his pocket-book.

Taking half a sheet of note paper he wrote as follows:

Appleweight and his gang are cowards. Within ten days those that have not been hanged will be in jail at Kildare.

He studied the phraseology critically and then placed the paper in the cob stopper whose halves he tied together with a bit of twine. As the jug stood on the table it was, to all appearances, exactly as it had been when delivered to Ardmore on the rear of the train at Kildare, and he was thoroughly well pleased with himself. He changed the blue scarf with which he had begun the day for one of purple with gold bars, and walked up the street toward the state house.

This venerable edifice, meekly reposing amid noble trees, struck agreeably upon Ardmore's fancy. Here was government enthroned in quiet dignity, as becomes a venerable commonwealth, wearing its years like a veteran who has known war and tumult, but finds at last tranquillity and peace. He experienced a feeling of awe, without quite knowing it, as he strolled up the walk, climbed the steps to the portico and turned to look back from the shadow of the pillars. He had never but

once before visited an American public building—the New York city hall—and he felt that now, indeed, he had turned a corner and entered upon a new and strange world. He had watched army maneuvers abroad with about the same attention that he gave to a ballet, and with a like feeling of beholding a show contrived for the amusement of spectators; but there was not even a policeman here to represent arsenals and bayonets. The only minion of government in sight was the languid operator of a lawn-mower, which rattled and hummed cheerily in the shadow of the soldiers' monument. There was something fine about a people, who, as he learned from the custodian, would not shake down these historic walls obedient to the demands of prosperity and growth, but sent increased business to find lodgment elsewhere. He ascended to the toy-like legislative chambers, where flags of nation and state hung side by side, and where the very seats and desks of the law-makers spoke of other times and manners.

Mr. Ardmore, feeling that he should now be about his business, sought the governor's office, where a secretary, who seemed harassed by the cares of his position, confirmed Ardmore's knowledge of the governor's absence.

"I didn't wish to see the governor on business," ex-

plained Ardmore pleasantly, leaning upon his stick with an air of leisure. "He and my father were old friends, and I always promised my father that I would never pass through Raleigh without calling on Governor Dangerfield."

"That is too bad," remarked the young man sympathetically, though with a preoccupation that was eloquent of larger affairs.

"Could you tell me whether any members of the governor's family are at home?"

"Oh, yes; Mrs. Dangerfield and Miss Jerry are at the mansion."

"Miss Jerry?"

"Miss Geraldine. We all call her Miss Jerry in North Carolina."

"Oh, yes; to be sure. Let me see; it's over this way to the mansion, isn't it?" inquired Ardmore.

"No; out the other end of the building—and turn to your right. You can't miss it."

The room was quiet, the secretary a young man of address and intelligence. Here, without question, was the place for Ardmore to discharge his business and be quit of it; but having at last snatched a commission from fleeting opportunity it was not for him to throw it

to another man. As he opened the door to leave, the secretary arrested him.

"Oh, Mr.—pardon me, but did you come in from the south this morning?"

"Yes; I came up on the Tar Heel Express from Atlanta."

"To be sure. Of course you didn't sit up all night? There's some trouble brewing around Kildare. I thought you might have heard something, but of course you couldn't have been awake at two o'clock in the morning?"

The secretary was so anxious to acquit him of any knowledge of the situation at Kildare that it seemed kindest to tell him nothing. The secretary's face lost its anxiety for a moment, and he smiled.

"The governor has an old friend and admirer up there who always puts a jug of fresh buttermilk on board when he passes through. The governor was expected home this morning, and I thought maybe—"

"You're positive it's always buttermilk, are you?" asked Ardmore with a grin.

"Certainly," replied the secretary with dignity. "Governor Dangerfield's sentiments as to the liquor traffic are well known."

"Of course, all the world knows that. But I'm afraid all jugs look alike to me; but then, the fact is I'm in the jug business myself. Good morning."

The governor's mansion was easily found, and having walked about the neighborhood until his watch marked eleven Ardmore entered the grounds and rang the bell at the front door.

Once within, the air of domestic peace, the pictures on the walls, a whip and a felt hat with a blue band, on the hall table, and a book on a chair in the drawing-room, turned down to mark the absent reader's place, rebuked him for his impudence. If he had known just how to escape he would have done so; but the maid who admitted him had said that Miss Dangerfield was at home, and had gone in search of her with Ardmore's card. He deserved to be sent to jail for entering a gentleman's house in this way. He realized now, when it was too late, that he ought to have brought letters to one of the banks and been introduced to the Dangerfields by some gentleman of standing, if he wished to know them. The very portraits on the walls, the photographs on the mantel and table frowned coldly upon him. The foundations of his character were set in sand; he knew that, because he had found it so easy to lie, and he had been

told in his youth that one sin paved the way for another. He would take the earliest train for Ardsley and bury himself there for the remainder of his days. He had hardly formed this resolution when a light step sounded in the hall, and Miss Geraldine Dangerfield stood at the threshold. His good resolutions went down like a house of cards.

"Miss Dangerfield," he began, "I had the pleasure of meeting your father in New Orleans the other day, and as I was passing through town unexpectedly, I thought I should give myself the pleasure of calling on him. He said that in case I found him absent I might call upon you. In fact, he wrote a line on a card for me to present, but I stupidly left it at my hotel."

They faced each other in the dim, cool room for what seemed to him endless centuries. She was much younger than he had imagined; but her eyes were blue, just as he remembered them, and her abundant light hair curled away from her forehead in pretty waves, and was tied to-day with a large bow of blue ribbon. For an instant she seemed puzzled or mystified, but her blue eyes regarded him steadily. The very helplessness of her youth, the simplicity of her blue linen gown, the girlish ribbon in her hair, proclaimed him blackguard.

"Won't you please sit down, Mr. Ardmore?"

And when they were seated there was another pause, during which the blue eyes continued to take account of him, and he fingered his tie, feeling sure that there was something wrong with it.

"It's warm, isn't it?"

"I suppose it is. It's a way summer has, of being mostly warm."

He was quite sure that she was laughing at him; there was a tinge of irony in the very way in which she pronounced "wa'm," lingeringly, as though to prolong her contempt for his stupidity in not finding anything better to say.

She had taken the largest chair in the room, and it seemed to hide her away in its shadows, so that she could examine him at her leisure as he sat under a window in the full glare of its light.

"I enjoyed meeting your father so much, Miss Dangerfield. I think we are always likely to be afraid of great men, but your father made me feel at home at once. And he tells such capital stories—I've been laughing over them ever since I left New Orleans."

"Father has quite a reputation for his stories. When did you leave New Orleans, Mr. Ardmore?"

"Sunday night. I stopped in Atlanta a few hours and came on through. What a fine old town Atlanta is; don't you think so?"

"I certainly do not, Mr. Ardmore. It's so dreadfully northernized."

When she said "no'thenized" her intonation gave the word a fine cutting edge.

"I suppose, Mr. Ardmore, that you saw papa at the luncheon at the Pharos Club in New Orleans?"

"Why, yes, Miss Dangerfield. It was there I met the governor!"

"Are you sure it was there, Mr. Ardmore?"

"Why, I think that was the place. I don't know my New Orleans as I should, but—"

Ardmore was suddenly conscious that Miss Dangerfield had risen and that she stood before him, with her fair face the least bit flushed, her blue eyes alight with anger, and that the hands at her sides were clenched nervously.

"My father was not at luncheon at the Pharos Club, Mr. Ardmore. You never saw my father in your life. I know why it is you came here, and if you are not out of that door in one second I shall call the servants and have them throw you out."

She ceased abruptly and turned to look into the hall where steps sounded.

"Is that you, Jerry?"

"Yes, mama; I'll be up in just a minute. Please don't wait for me. It's only the man to see about the plumbing."

The lady who had appeared for an instant at the door went on slowly up the stairs, and the girl held Ardmore silent with her steady eyes until the step died away above.

"I know what you want my father for. Mr. Billings and you are both pursuing him—it's infamous, outrageous! And it isn't his fault. I would have you know that my father is an honorable man!"

The bayonets were at his breast: he would ask for mercy.

"Miss Dangerfield, you are quite mistaken about me. I shall leave Raleigh at once, but I don't want you to think I came here on any errand to injure or annoy your father."

"You are one of *those* Ardmores, and Mr. Billings represents you. You thought you could come here and trick me into telling where my father is. But I am not so easily caught. My mother is ill because of all this

trouble, and I must go to her. But first I want to see that you leave this house!"

"Oh, I'm sorry you are in trouble. On my honor, Miss Dangerfield, I know nothing of Billings and his business with your father."

"I suppose you will deny that you saw Mr. Billings in Atlanta yesterday?"

"Why, no. I can't exactly—"

"You'd better not! I saw you there talking to him; and I suppose he sent you here to see what you could find out."

The room whirled a moment as she dealt this staggering blow. Billings, of the Bronx Loan and Trust Company, had said that Miss Dangerfield was peppery, but his employment of this trifling term only illustrated his weak command of the English language. It is not pleasant to be pilloried for undreamed-of crimes, and Ardmore's ears tingled. He must plunge deeper and trust to the gods of chance to save him. He brought himself together with an effort, and spoke so earnestly that the words rang oddly in his own ears.

"Miss Dangerfield, you may call me anything you please, but I am not quite the scoundrel you think me. It's true that I was not in New Orleans, and I never saw

your father in my life. I came to Raleigh on a mission that has absolutely nothing to do with Mr. Billings; he did not know I was coming. On the way here a message intended for your father came into my hands. It was thrown on the train at Kildare last night. I had gone out on the platform because the sleeper was hot, and a warning to your father to keep his hands off of Appleweight was given to me. Here it is. It seems to me that there is immediate danger in this, and I want to help you. I want to do anything I can for you. I didn't come here to pry into your family secrets, Miss Dangerfield, honestly I didn't!"

She took the piece of paper into her slim little hands and read it, slowly nodding her head, as if the words only confirmed some earlier knowledge of the threat they contained. Then she lifted her head, and her eyes were bright with mirth as Ardmore's wondering gaze met them.

"Did *you* get the jug?"

"I got two jugs, to tell the truth; but when they seemed dissatisfied and howled for me to give one back, I threw off the buttermilk."

"You threw back father's buttermilk to the man who gave you the applejack? Oh! oh!"

Miss Jerry Dangerfield sat down and laughed; and Ardmore, glad of an opportunity to escape, found his hat and rushed from the house.

CHAPTER V

MR. ARDMORE OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED

"She never did it; she never, never did!"

Mr. Ardmore, from a bench in the State House park, thus concluded a long reverie. It was late afternoon, and he had forgotten luncheon in his absorption. There was no manner of use in recurring again to that episode of the lonely siding. He had found the girl—(indubitably the girl)—but not the wink! Miss Jerry Dangerfield was not the winking sort; he was well satisfied on that point, and so thoroughly ashamed into the bargain that he resolved to lead a different life and be very heedful of the cry of the poor in the future. His emotions had never been taxed as to-day, and he hoped that he might never again suffer the torture he had experienced as he waited in the governor's drawing-room for Miss Dangerfield to appear. After that agony it had been a positive relief to be ordered out of the house. Her anger when she caught him lying about having met her father in New Orleans was superior to

any simulated rage he had ever seen on the stage, and no girl with a winking eye would be capable of it. He was not clever; he knew that; but if he had had the brains of a monkey he would not have risked his foolish wits against those of a girl like Geraldine Dangerfield, who had led him into an ambush and then shot him to pieces.

"She threatened to have the servants throw me out!" he groaned. And her slight, tense figure rose before him, and her voice, still the voice of young girlhood, rang in his ears. As she read the threatening message from Kildare he had noted the fineness of her hands, the curve of her fair cheek, the wayward curls on her forehead, and he remembered all these things now, but more than anything else her wrath, the tiny fists, the flashing eyes as she confronted him. As he sat dejectedly on his park bench he was unaware that Miss Geraldine Dangerfield, walking hurriedly through the park on her way from the governor's mansion to the state house, passed directly behind him. His attitude was so eloquent of despair that it could not have failed to move a much harder heart than that of Miss Dangerfield, yet she made no sign; but a few minutes later the private secretary came out on the steps of the state house, and after a

brief survey of the landscape crossed the lawn and called Ardmore by name.

"I beg your pardon, but Miss Dangerfield wished me to say that she'd like to see you for a minute. She's at the governor's office."

A prisoner, sentenced to death, and unexpectedly reprieved with the rope already on his neck, could not experience greater relief than that which brought Mr. Thomas Ardmore to his feet.

"You are sure of it—that there's no mistake?"

"Certainly not. Miss Dangerfield told me I was to bring you back."

Enthroned at the secretary's desk, a mass of papers before her, Miss Geraldine Dangerfield awaited him. He was ready to place his head on the block in sheer contrition for his conduct, but she herself took the initiative, and her tone was wholly amiable.

"This morning, Mr. Ardmore—"

"Oh, please forget this morning!" he pleaded.

"But I was rude to you; I threatened to have you thrown out of the house; and you had come to do us a favor."

"Miss Dangerfield, I can not lie to you. You are one of the most difficult persons to lie to that I have ever

met. I didn't come to Raleigh just to warn your father that his life was threatened. I can't lie to you about that—"

"Then you *are* a spy?" and Miss Dangerfield started forward in her chair so suddenly that Ardmore dropped his hat.

"No! I am not a spy! I don't care anything about your father. I never heard of him until yesterday."

"Well, I like that!" ejaculated Miss Dangerfield.

"Oh, I mean that I wasn't interested in him—why should I be? I don't know anything about politics."

"Neither does father. That's why he's governor. If he were a politician he'd be a senator. But"—and she folded her hands and eyed him searchingly—"here's a lot of telegrams from the sheriff of Dilwell County about that jug. How on earth did you come to get it?"

"Lied, of course. I allowed them to think I was intimately associated in business with the governor, and they began passing me jugs. Then the man who gave the jug with that message in the cork got suspicious, and I dropped the buttermilk jug back to him."

"You traded buttermilk for moonshine?"

"I shouldn't exactly call it moonshine. It's more like dynamite than anything else. I've written a reply to

the note and put it back in the cork, and I'm going to return it to Kildare."

"What answer did you make to that infamous effort to intimidate my father?" demanded Miss Dangerfield.

"I told the Appleweight gang that they are a lot of cowards, and that the governor will have them all in jail or hanged within ten days."

"Splendid! Perfectly *splendid!* Did you really say that?"

"What else could I do? I knew that that's what the governor would say—he'd have to say it—so I thought I'd save him the trouble."

"Where's the jug now, Mr. Ardmore?"

"In my room at the hotel. The gang must have somebody on guard here. A gentleman who seemed to be one of them called on me this morning, demanding the jug; and if he's the man I think he is, he's stolen the little brown jug from my room in the hotel by this time."

Miss Dangerfield had picked up a spool of red tape and was unwinding it slowly in her fingers and rewinding it. They were such nice little hands, and so peaceful in their aimless trifling with the tape that he was sure his eyes had betrayed him into imagining she had

clenched them in the quiet drawing-room at the mansion. This office, now that its atmosphere enveloped him, was almost as domestic as the house in which she lived. The secretary had vanished, and a Sabbath quiet was on the place. The white inner shutters swung open, affording a charming prospect of the trees, the lawn and the monument in the park outside. And, pleasantest of all, and most soothing to his weary senses, she was tolerating him now; she had even expressed approval of something he had done, and he had never hoped for this. She had not even pressed him to disclose his real purpose in visiting Raleigh, and he prayed that she would not return to this subject, for he had utterly lost the conceit of his own lying gift. Miss Dangerfield threw down the spool of tape and bent toward him gravely.

"Mr. Ardmore, can you keep a secret?"

"Nobody ever tried me with one, but I think I can, Miss Dangerfield," he murmured humbly.

"Then please stand up."

And Ardmore rose, a little sheepishly, like a schoolboy who fears blame and praise alike. Miss Dangerfield lifted one of the adorable hands solemnly.

"I, acting governor of North Carolina, hereby appoint

you my private secretary, and may God have mercy on your soul. You may now sit down, Mr. Secretary."

"But I thought there was a secretary already. And besides, I don't write a very good hand," Ardmore stammered.

"I am just sending Mr. Bassford to Atlanta to find papa. He's already gone, or will be pretty soon."

"But I thought your father would be home to-night."

Miss Dangerfield looked out of the open window upon the park, then into the silent outer hall, to be sure she was not overheard.

"Papa will not be at home to-night, or probably to-morrow night, or the night afterward. I'm not sure we'll wait next Christmas dinner for papa."

"But of course you know where he is! It isn't possible—" and Ardmore stared in astonishment into Miss Dangerfield's tranquil blue eyes.

"It *is* possible. Papa is ducking his official responsibilities. That's what's the matter with papa! And I guess they're enough to drive any man into the woods. Just look at all this!"

Miss Dangerfield rested one of those diminutive hands of hers on the pile of documents, letters and telegrams the secretary had left behind him; with a nod of the

head she indicated the governor's desk in the inner room, and it, too, was piled high with documents.

"I supposed," faltered Ardmore, "that in the absence of the governor the lieutenant-governor would act. I think I read that once."

"You must have read it wrong, Mr. Ardmore. In North Carolina, in the absence of the governor, I am governor! Don't look so shocked; when I say I, I mean I—*me!* Do you understand what I said?"

"I heard what you said, Miss Dangerfield."

"I mean what I said, Mr. Ardmore. I have taken you into my confidence because I don't know you. I don't know anything about you. I don't want to know anything about you. I'd be ashamed to ask anybody I know to help me. The people of North Carolina must never know that the governor is absent during times of great public peril. And if *you* are afraid, Mr. Ardmore, you had better not accept the position."

"There's nothing I wouldn't do for you," blurted Ardmore.

"I'm not asking you—I *would* not ask you—to do anything for me. I am asking you to do it for the Old North State. Our relations, Mr. Ardmore, will not be social, but purely official. Do you accept the terms?"

"I do; and I warn you now that I shall never resign."

"I have heard papa say that life is short and the tenure of office uncertain. I can remove you at any time I please. Now do you understand that this is a serious business? There's likely to be a lot of trouble, and no time for asking questions, so when I say it's so it's so."

"It's so," repeated Ardmore docilely.

"Now, here's the sheriff at Kildare, on our side of the line, who writes to say that he is powerless to catch Appleweight. He's afraid of the dark, that man! You see, the grand jury in Dilwell County—that's Kildare, you know—has indicted Appleweight as a common outlaw, but the grand jurors were all friends of Appleweight and the indictment was only to satisfy law-and-order sentiment and appease the Woman's Civic League of Raleigh. Now, papa doesn't—I mean *I* don't want to offend those Appleweight people by meddling in this business. Papa wants Governor Osborne to arrest Appleweight in South Carolina; but I don't believe Governor Osborne will dare do anything about it. Now, Mr. Ardmore, I am not going to have papa called a coward by anybody, particularly by South Carolina people, after what Governor Osborne said of our state."

"Why, what did he say?"

"He said in a speech at Charleston last winter that no people who fry their meat can ever amount to anything, and he meant us! I can never forgive him for that; besides, his daughter is the stuck-upest thing! And I'd like Barbara Osborne to tell me how *she* got into the Colonial Dames, and what call *she* has to be inspector-general of the Granddaughters of the Mexican War; for I've heard my grandfather Dangerfield say many a time that old Colonel Osborne and his South Carolina regiment never did go outside of Charleston until the war was over and the American army had come back home."

One tiny fist this time! Ardmore was sure of it. Her indignation against the Osbornes was so sincere, the pouting petulance to which it diminished so like a child's, and the gravity of the offense so novel in his simple experiences, that Ardmore was bound in chains before her speech was finished. The little drawl with which she concluded gave heightened significance to her last three words, so that it seemed that all the veterans of the war with Mexico trudged by, bearing the flag of North Carolina and no other banner.

"Governor Osborne is a contemptible ruffian," declared Ardmore with deep feeling.

Miss Dangerfield nodded judicial approval, and settled back in her chair the better to contemplate her new secretary, and said:

"I'm a Daughter of the Confederacy and a Colonial Dame. What are you?"

"I suppose you'll never speak to me again; papa sent three expensive substitutes to the Civil War."

"Three! Horrible!"

"Two of them deserted, and one fell into the Potomac on his way south and was drowned. I guess they didn't do you folks much harm."

"We'll forgive you that; but what did your ancestors do in the Revolution?"

"I'm ashamed to say that my great-grandfather was a poor guesser. He died during Washington's second administration still believing the Revolution a failure."

"Do you speak of the war of 1861 as the Rebellion or as the war between the states? I advise you to be careful what you say," and Miss Jerry Dangerfield was severe.

"I don't believe I ever mentioned it either way, so I'm willing to take your word for it."

"The second form is correct, Mr. Ardmore. When well-bred Southern people say Rebellion they refer to the uprising of 1776 against the British oppressor."

"Good. I'm sure I shall never get them mixed. Now that you are the governor, what are you going to do first about Appleweight?"

"I've written—that is to say, papa wrote before he went away, a strong letter to Governor Osborne, complaining that Appleweight was hiding in South Carolina and running across the state line to rob and murder people in North Carolina. Papa told Governor Osborne that he must break up the Appleweight crowd or he would do something about it himself. It's a splendid letter; you would think that even a coward like Governor Osborne would do something after getting such a letter."

"Didn't he answer the letter?"

"Answer it? He never got it! Papa didn't send it; that's the reason! Papa's the kindest man in the world, and he must have been afraid of hurting Governor Osborne's feelings. He wrote the letter, expecting to send it, but when he went off to New Orleans he told Mr. Bassford to hold it till he got back. He had even signed it—you can read it if you like."

It was undoubtedly a vigorous epistle, and Ardmore

felt the thrill of its rhetorical sentences as he read. The official letter paper on which it was typewritten, and the signature of William Dangerfield, governor of North Carolina, affixed in a bold hand, were sobering in themselves. The dignity and authority of one of the sovereign American states was represented here, and he handed the paper back to Miss Dangerfield as tenderly as though it had been the original draft of Magna Charta.

"It's a corker, all right."

"I don't much like the way it ends. It says, right here"—and she bent forward and pointed to the place under criticism—"it says, 'Trusting to your sense of equity, and relying upon a continuance of the traditional friendship between your state and mine, I am, sir, awaiting your reply, very respectfully, your obedient servant.' Now, I wouldn't trust to his sense of anything, and that traditional friendship business is just fluffy nonsense, and I wouldn't be anybody's obedient servant. I decided when I wasn't more than fifteen years old, with a lot of other girls in our school, that when we got married we'd never say obey, and we never have, though only three of our class are married yet, but we're all engaged."

"Engaged?"

"Of course; we're engaged. I'm engaged to Rutherford Gillingwater, the adjutant-general of this state. You couldn't be my private secretary if I wasn't engaged; it wouldn't be proper."

The earth was only a flying cinder on which he strove for a foothold. She had announced her engagement to be married with a cool finality that took his breath away; and not realizing the chaos into which she had flung him, she returned demurely to the matter of the letter.

"We can't change that letter, because it's signed close to the 'obedient servant' and there's no room. But I'm going to put it into the typewriter and add a postscript."

She sat down before the machine and inexpertly rolled the sheet into place; then, with Ardmore helping her to find the keys, she wrote:

I demand an imediate reply.

"*Demand* and *immediate* are both business words. Are you sure there's only one *m* in immediate? All right, if you know. I reckon a postscript like that doesn't need to be signed. I'll just put 'W. D.' there with papa's stub pen, so it will look really fierce. Now, you're the secretary; you copy it in the copying press and I'll address the envelope."

"Don't you have to put the state seal on it?" asked Ardmore.

"Of course not. You have to get that from the secretary of state, and I don't like him; he has such funny whiskers, and calls me little girl. Besides, you never put the seal on a letter; it's only necessary for official documents."

She bade him give the letter plenty of time to copy, and talked cheerfully while he waited. She spoke of her friends, as Southern people have a way of doing, as though every one must of course know them—a habit that is illuminative of that delightful Southern neighborliness that knits the elect of a commonwealth into a single family, that neither time and tide nor sword and brand can destroy. Ardmore's humility increased as the names of the great and good of North Carolina fell from her lips; for they were as strange to him as an Abysinnian dynasty. It was perfectly clear that he was not of her world, and that his own was insignificant and undistinguished compared with hers. His spirit was stayed somewhat by the knowledge that he, and not the execrable Gillingwater, had been chosen as her coadjutor in the present crisis. His very ignorance of the royal fam-

ilies of North Carolina, which she recited so glibly, and the fact that he was unknown at the capital, had won him official recognition, and it was for him now to prove his worth. The political plot into which he had been most willingly drawn pleased him greatly; it was superior to his fondest dream of adventure, and now, moreover, he had what he never had before, a definite purpose in life, which was to be equal to the task to which this intrepid girl assigned him.

"Well, that's done," said Miss Jerry, when the letter, still damp from the copy-press, had been carefully sealed and stamped. "Governor Osborne will get it in the morning. I think maybe we'd better telegraph him that it's coming."

"I don't see much use in that, when he'll get the letter first thing to-morrow," Ardmore suggested. "It costs money to telegraph and you must have an economical administration."

"The good of it would be to keep him worried and make him very angry. And if he told Barbara Osborne about it, it would make her angry, too, and maybe she wouldn't sleep any all night, the haughty thing! Hand me one of those telegraph blanks."

The message, slowly thumped out on the typewriter, and several times altered and copied, finally read:

Raleigh, N. C.

The Honorable Charles Osborne,
Governor of South Carolina,
Columbia, S. C.:

Have written by to-night's mail in Appleweight matter. Your vacillating course not understood.

William Dangerfield,
Governor of North Carolina.

"I reckon that will make him take notice;" and Miss Jerry viewed her work with approval. "And now, Mr. Ardmore, here's a telegram from Mr. Billings which I don't understand. See if you know what it means."

Ardmore chuckled delightedly as he read:

Can not understand your outrageous conduct in bond matter. If payment is not made June first your state's credit is ruined. Where is Foster? Answer to Atlanta.

George P. Billings.

"I don't see what's so funny about that! Mr. Bassford was walking the floor with that message when I came to the office. He said papa and the state were both going to be ruined. There's a quarter of a million dollars to be paid on bonds that are coming due June first, and there isn't any money to pay them with. That's

what he said. And Mr. Foster is the state treasurer, and he's gone fishing."

"Fishing?"

"He left word he had gone fishing. Mr. Foster and papa don't get along together, and Mr. Bassford says he's run off just to let those bonds default and bring disgrace on papa and the state."

Ardmore's grin broadened. The Appleweight case was insignificant compared with this new business with which he was confronted. He was vaguely conscious that bonds have a way of coming due, and that there is such a thing as credit in the world, and that it is something that must not be trifled with; but these considerations did not weigh heavily with him. For the first time in his uneventful life vengeance unsheathed her sword in his tranquil soul. Billings had always treated him with contempt, as a negligible factor in the Ardmore millions, and here at last was an opportunity to balance accounts.

"I will show you how to fix Billings. Just let me have one of those blanks."

And after much labor, and with occasional suggestions from Miss Jerry, the following message was presently ready for the wires:

Your infamous imputation upon my honor and that of the state shall meet with the treatment it deserves. I defy you to do your worst. If you come into North Carolina or bring legal proceedings for the collection of your bonds I will fill you so full of buckshot that forty men will not be strong enough to carry you to your grave.

"Isn't that perfectly grand!" murmured Jerry admiringly. "But I thought your family and the Bronx Loan and Trust Company were the same thing. That's what Rutherford Gillingwater told me once."

"You are quite right. Billings works for us. Before I came of age he used to make me ask his permission when I wanted to buy a new necktie, and when I was in college he was always fussing over my bills, and humiliating me when he could."

"But you mustn't make him so mad that he will cause papa trouble and bring disgrace on our administration."

"Don't you worry about Billings. He is used to having people get down on their knees to him, and the change will do him good. When he gets over his first stroke of apoplexy he will lock himself in a dark room and begin to think hard about what to do. He usually does all the bluffing, and I don't suppose anybody ever talked to him like this telegram in all his life. Where is this man Foster?"

"Just fishing; that's what Mr. Bassford said, but he didn't know where. Father was going to call a special session of the legislature to investigate him, and he was so angry that he ran off so that papa would have to look after those bonds himself. Then this Appleweight case came up, and that worried papa a great deal. Here's his call for the special session. He told Mr. Bassford to hold that, too, until he came back from New Orleans."

Ardmore read Governor Dangerfield's summons to the legislature with profound interest. It was signed, but the space for the date on which the law-makers were to assemble had been left blank.

"It looks to me as though you had the whole state in your hands, Miss Dangerfield. But I don't believe we ought to call the special session just yet. It would be sure to injure the state's credit, and it will be a lot more fun to catch Foster. I wonder if he took all the state money with him."

"Mr. Bassford said he didn't know and couldn't find out, for the clerks in the treasurer's office wouldn't tell him a single thing."

"One should never deal with subordinates," remarked Ardmore sagely. "Deal with the principals—I heard a banker say that once, and he was a man who knew every-

thing. Besides, it will be more fun to attend to the bonds ourselves."

He seemed lost in reverie for several minutes, and she asked with some impatience what he was studying about.

"I was trying to think of a word they use when the government has war or any kind of trouble. It's something about a corpse, but I can't remember it."

"A corpse? How perfectly horrid! Can it be possible, Mr. Ardmore, that you mean the writ of habeas corpus?" The twinkle in his eye left her unable to determine whether his ignorance was real, or assumed for his own amusement.

"That's it," beamed Ardmore. "We've got to suspend it if worst comes to worst. Then you can put anybody you like into a dungeon, and nobody can get him out—not for a million years."

"I wonder where they keep it?" asked Jerry. "It must be here somewhere. Perhaps it's in the safe."

"I don't think it's a thing, like a lemon, or a photograph, or a bottle of ink; it's a document, like a Thanksgiving proclamation, and you order out the militia, and the soldiers have to leave their work and assemble at their armories, and it's all very serious, and somebody is likely to get shot."

"I don't think it would be nice to shoot people," said Jerry. "That would do the administration a terrible lot of harm."

"Of course we won't resort to extreme measures unless we are forced to it. And then, after we have exhausted all the means at our command, we can call on the president to send United States troops."

He was proud of his knowledge, which had lingered in his sub-consciousness from a review of the military power of the states which he had heard once from Griswold, who knew about such matters; but he was brought to earth promptly enough.

"Mr. Ardmore, how dare you suggest that we call United States troops into North Carolina! Don't you know that would be an insult to every loyal son of this state? I should have you know that the state of North Carolina is big enough to take care of herself, and if any president of the United States sends any troops down here while I'm running this office, he'll find that, while our people will gladly die, they never surrender."

"Oh, I didn't mean anything like that by what I said," pleaded Ardmore, frightened almost to tears. "Of course, we've got our own troops, and we'll get through all our business without calling for help. I shouldn't

any more call on the president than I'd call on the czar of Russia."

She seemed satisfied with this disclaimer, and produced a diary in which Governor Dangerfield had noted his appointments far into the future.

"We'll have to break a lot of engagements for papa. Here's a speech he promised to make at Wilmington at the laying of the corner-stone of the new orphan asylum. That's to-morrow, and papa can't be there, so we'll send a telegram of congratulation to be read instead. Then he was to preside at a convention of the Old Fiddlers' Association at Goldsboro the next day, and he can't do that. I guess we'd better telegraph and say how sorry he is to be delayed by important official business. And here's—why, I had forgotten about the National Guard encampment, that's beginning now."

"Do you mean the state militia?" Ardmore inquired.

"Why, of course. They're having their annual encampment over in Azbell County at Camp Dangerfield —they always name the camp for the governor—and father was to visit the camp next Saturday for his annual inspection. That's near your county, where your farm is; didn't you know that?"

Ardmore was humble, as he always was when his ignorance was exposed, but his face brightened joyfully.

"You mustn't break that engagement. Those troops ought to be inspected. Inspecting his troops is one of the most important things a governor has to do. It's just like a king or an emperor. I've seen Emperor William and King Humbert inspect their soldiers, and they go galloping by like mad, with all the soldiers saluting, and it's perfectly bully. And then there have to be maneuvers, to see whether the troops know how to fight or not, and forced marches and sham battles."

"Papa always speaks to the men," suggested Jerry, a little abashed by the breadth and splendor of Ardmore's knowledge. His comparison of the North Carolina militia with the armies of Europe pleased her.

"I think the ladies of the royal family inspect the troops, too, sometimes," he continued. "The queens are always honorary colonels of regiments, and present them with flags, which is a graceful thing to do."

"Colonel Gillingwater never told me that, and he's the adjutant-general of the state and ought to know."

"What's he colonel of?" asked Ardmore gloomily.

"He was colonel in the Spanish War, or was going to be, but he got typhoid fever, and so he couldn't go to

Cuba, and papa appointed him adjutant-general as a reward for his services; but everybody calls him Colonel just the same."

"It looks like a pretty easy way of getting a title," murmured Ardmore. "I had typhoid fever once, and nearly died, and all my hair came out."

"You oughtn't to speak that way of my fiancé. It's quite impertinent in a mere private secretary to talk so."

"I beg your pardon. I forgot that you were engaged. You'll have to go to Camp Dangerfield and inspect the troops yourself, and they would a lot rather have you inspect them than have your father do it."

"You mustn't say things like that! I thought I told you your appointment carried no social recognition. You mustn't talk to me as though I was a girl you really know—"

"But there's no use of making-believe such things when I do know you!"

"Not the least little tiny bit, you don't! Do you suppose, if you were a gentleman I knew and had been introduced to, I would be talking to you here in papa's office?"

"But I pretend to be a gentleman; you certainly

wouldn't be talking to me if you thought me anything else."

"I can't even discuss the matter, Mr. Ardmore. A gentleman wouldn't lie to a lady."

"But if you know I'm a liar why are you telling me these secrets and asking me to help you play being governor?" and Ardmore, floundering hopelessly, marveled at her more and more.

"That's exactly the reason—because you came poking up to my house and told me that scandalous fib about meeting papa in New Orleans. Mr. Bassford is a beautiful liar; that's why he's papa's secretary; but you are a much more imaginative sort of liar than Mr. Bassford. He can only lie to callers about papa being engaged, or write encouraging letters to people who want appointments which papa never expects to make; but you lie because you can't help it. Now, if you're satisfied, you can take those telegrams down to the telegraph office, and you'd better mail that letter to Governor Osborne yourself, for fear the man who's running the lawn-mower will forget to come for it."

The roll of drums and the cry of a bugle broke in upon the peace of the late afternoon. Miss Jerry rose with an exclamation and ran out into the broad portico

of the state house. Several battalions of a tide-water regiment, passing through town on their way to Camp Dangerfield, had taken advantage of a wait in Raleigh to disembark and show themselves at the capital. They were already halted and at parade rest at the side of the street, and a mounted officer in khaki, galloping madly into view, seemed to focus the eyes of the gathering crowd. He was a gallant figure of a man; his mount was an animal that realized Job's ideal of a battle-horse; the soldiers presented arms as the horseman rode the line. Miss Dangerfield waved her handkerchief, standing eagerly on tiptoe to make her salutation carry as far as possible.

"Who is that?" asked Ardmore, with sinking spirit.

"Why, Rutherford Gillingwater, of course."

"Fours right!" rang the command a moment later, and the militiamen tramped off to the station.

It was then that Ardmore, watching the crowd disperse at the edge of the park, saw his caller of the morning striding rapidly across the street. Ardmore started forward, then checked himself so suddenly that Miss Jerry Dangerfield turned to him inquiringly.

"What's the matter?" she demanded.

"Nothing. I have been robbed, as I hoped to be.

Over there on the sidewalk, beyond the girl in the pink sunbonnet, goes my little brown jug. That lank individual with the shabby hat has lifted it out of my room at the hotel, just as I thought he would."

CHAPTER VI

MR. GRISWOLD FORSAKES THE ACADEMIC LIFE

Miss Osborne had asked Griswold to await the outcome of the day, and, finding himself thus possessed of a vacation, he indulged his antiquarian instincts by exploring Columbia. The late afternoon found him in the lovely cathedral churchyard, where an aged negro, tending the graves of an illustrious family, leaned upon his spade and recited the achievements and virtues of the dead. Men who had been law-makers, others who had led valiantly to battle, and ministers of the Prince of Peace, mingled their dust together; and across the crisp hedges a robin sang above Timrod's grave.

As the shadows lengthened, Griswold walked back to the hotel, where he ate supper, then, calling for a horse, he rode through the streets in a mood of more complete alienation than he had ever experienced in a foreign country; yet the very scents of the summer night, stealing out from old gardens, the voices that reached him from open doorways, spoke of home.

As he reached the outskirts of town and rode on toward the governor's mansion, his mood changed, and he laughed softly, for he remembered Ardmore, and Ardmore was beyond question the most amusing person he knew. It was unfortunate, he generously reflected, that Ardmore, rather than himself, had not been plunged into this present undertaking, which was much more in Ardmore's line than his own. There would, however, be a great satisfaction in telling Ardmore of his unexpected visit to Columbia, in exchange for his friend's report of his pursuit of the winking eye. He only regretted that in the nature of things Columbia is a modern city, a seat of commerce as well as of government, a place where bank clearings are seriously computed, and where the jaunty adventurer with sword and ruffles is quite likely to run afoul of the police. Yet his own imagination was far more fertile than Ardmore's, and he would have hailed a troop of mail-clad men as joyfully as his friend had he met them clanking in the highway. Thus, modern as we think ourselves, the least venturesome among us dreams that some day some turn of a street corner will bring him face to face with what we please to call our fate; and this is the manifestation of our last drop of medieval blood. The grimmest seeker after

reality looks out of the corner of his eye for the flutter of a white handkerchief from the ivied tower he affects to ignore; and, in spite of himself, he is buoyed by the hope that some day a horn will sound for him over the nearest hill.

Miss Osborne met him at the veranda steps. Indoors a mandolin and piano struck up the merry chords of *The Eutaw Girl.*

"My young sisters have company. We'll sit here, if you don't mind."

She led the way to a quiet corner, and after they were seated she was silent a moment, while the light from the windows showed clearly that her perplexity of the morning was not yet at an end. The music tinkled softly, and a breeze swept in upon them with faint odors of the garden.

"I hope you won't mind, Mr. Griswold, if I appear to be ashamed of you. It's not a bit hospitable to keep you outside our threshold; but—you understand—I don't have to tell you!"

"I understand perfectly, Miss Osborne!"

"It seems best not to let the others know just why you are here. I told my sisters that you were an old friend —of father's—who wished to leave a message for him."

"That will do first rate!" he laughed. "My status is fixed. I know your father, but as for ourselves, we are not acquainted."

He felt that she was seriously anxious and troubled, and he wished to hearten her if he could. The soft dusk of the faintly-lighted corner folded her in. Behind her the vines of the veranda moved slightly in the breeze. A thin, wayward shaft of light touched her hair, as though searching out the gold. When we say that people have atmosphere, we really mean that they possess indefinite qualities that awaken new moods in us, as by that magic through which an ignorant hand thrumming a harp's strings may evoke some harmony denied to conscious skill. He heard whispered in his heart a man's first word of the woman he is destined to love, in which he sets her apart; above and beyond all other womenkind —she is different; she is not like other women!

"It is nearly nine," she said, her voice thrilling through him. "My father should have been here an hour ago. We have heard nothing from him. The newspapers have telephoned repeatedly to know his whereabouts. I have put them off by intimating that he is away on important public business, and that his purpose might be defeated if his exact whereabouts were known.

I tried to intimate, without saying as much, that he was busy with the Appleweight case. One of the papers that has very bitterly antagonized father ever since his election has threatened to expose what the editor calls father's relations with Appleweight. I can not believe that there is anything wrong about that; of course there is not!"

She was controlling herself with an effort, and she broke off her declaration of confidence in her absent father sharply but with a sob in her voice.

"I have no doubt in the world that the explanation you gave the newspapers is the truth of the matter. Your father must be absent a great deal—it is part of a governor's business to keep in motion. But we may as well face the fact that his absence just now is most embarrassing. This Appleweight matter has reached a crisis, and a failure to handle it properly may injure your father's future as a public man. If you will pardon me, I would suggest that there must be some one whom you can take into your confidence—some friend, some one in your father's administration that you can rely on?"

"Yes; father has many friends; but I can not consider acknowledging to any one that father has disappeared

when such a matter as this Appleweight case is an issue through the state. No; I have thought of every one this afternoon. It would be a painful thing for his best friends to know what is—what seems to be the truth." Her voice wavered a little, but she was brave, and he was aware that she straightened herself in her chair, and, when wayward gleams of light fell upon her face, that her lips were set resolutely.

"You saw the attorney-general this morning," she went on. "As you suggested, he would naturally be the one to whom I should turn, but I can not do it. I—there is a reason"—and she faltered a moment—"there are reasons why I can not appeal to Mr. Bosworth at this time."

She shrugged her shoulders as though throwing off a disagreeable topic, and he saw that there was nothing more to be said on this point. His heart-beats quickened as he realized that she was appealing to him; that, though he was only the most casual acquaintance, she trusted him. It was a dictum of his, learned in his study and practise of the law, that issues must be met as they offer—not as the practitioner would prefer to have them, but as they occur; and here was a condition of affairs that must be met promptly if the unaccountable absence

of the governor was to be robbed of its embarrassing significance.

As he pondered for a moment, a messenger rode into the grounds, and Miss Osborne slipped away and met the boy at the steps. She came back and opened a telegram, reading the message at one of the windows. An indignant exclamation escaped her, and she crumpled the paper in her hand.

"The impudence of it!" she exclaimed. He had risen, and she now turned to him with anger and scorn deepening her beautiful color. Her breath came quickly; her head was lifted imperiously; her lips quivered slightly as she spoke.

"This is from Governor Dangerfield. Can you imagine a man of any character or decency sending such a message to the governor of another state?"

She watched him as he read:

RALEIGH, N. C.

The Honorable Charles Osborne,
Governor of South Carolina,
Columbia, S. C.:

Have written by to-night's mail in Appleweight matter. Your vacillating course not understood.

WILLIAM DANGERFIELD,
Governor of North Carolina.

"What do you think of that?" she demanded.

"I think it's impertinent, to say the least," he replied guardedly.

"Impertinent? It's the most contemptible, outrageous thing I ever heard of in my life! Governor Dangerfield has dilly-dallied with that case for two years. His administration has been marked from the beginning by the worst kind of incompetence. Why, this man Appleweight and his gang of outlaws only come into South Carolina now and then to hide and steal, but they commit most of their crimes in North Carolina, and they always have. Talk about a vacillating course! Father has never taken steps to arrest those men out of sheer regard for Governor Dangerfield; he thought North Carolina had some pride, and that her governor would prefer to take care of his own criminals. What do you suppose Appleweight is indicted for in this state? For stealing one ham—one single ham from a farmer in Mingo County, and he's killed half a dozen men in North Carolina."

She paced the corner of the veranda angrily, while Griswold groped for a solution of the problem. The telegram from Raleigh was certainly lacking in diplomatic suavity. It was patent that if the governor of North Carolina was not tremendously aroused, he was

playing a great game of bluff; and on either hypothesis a prompt response must be made to his telegram.

"I must answer this at once. He must not think we are so stupid in Columbia that we don't know when we're insulted. We can go through the side door to father's study and write the message there," and she led the way.

"It might be best to wait and see what his letter is like," suggested Griswold, with a vague wish to prolong this discussion, that he might enjoy the soft glow of the student lamp on her cheek.

"I don't care what his letter says; it can't be worse than his telegram. We'll answer them both at once."

She found a blank and wrote rapidly, without asking suggestions, with this result:

The Honorable William Dangerfield,
Raleigh, N. C.:
Your extremely diverting telegram in Appleweight case received and filed. CHARLES OSBORNE,
Governor of South Carolina.

She met Griswold's obvious disappointment with prompt explanation.

"You see, the governor of South Carolina can not stoop to an exchange of billingsgate with an underbred person like that—a big, solemn, conceited creature in a

long frock-coat and a shoestring necktie, who boasts of belonging to the common 'peo-pull.' He doesn't have to tell anybody that, when it's plain as daylight. The way to answer him is not to answer at all."

"The way to answer him is to make North Carolina put Appleweight in jail, for crimes committed in that state, and then, if need be, we can satisfy the cry for vengeance in South Carolina by flashing our requisition. There is a rule in such cases that the state having the heaviest indictments shall have precedence; and you say that in this state it's only a matter of a ham. I am not acquainted with the South Carolina ham," he went on, smiling, "but in Virginia the right kind of a ham is sacred property, and to steal one is a capital offense."

"I should like to steal one such as I had last winter in Richmond," and Miss Osborne forgot her anger; her eyes narrowed dreamily at an agreeable memory.

"Was it at Judge Randolph Wilson's?" asked Griswold instantly.

"Why, yes, it was at Judge Wilson's, Mr. Griswold. How did you know?"

"I didn't know; I guessed; for I have sat at that table myself. The judge says grace twice when there's to be ham—once before soup, then again before ham."

"Then thanksgiving after the ham would be perfectly proper!"

Miss Osborne was studying Griswold carefully, then she laughed, and her attitude toward him, that had been tempered by a certain official reserve, became at once cordial.

"Are you the Professor Griswold who is so crazy about pirates? I've heard the Wilsons speak of you, but you don't look like that."

"Don't I look like a pirate? Thank you! I had an appointment at Judge Wilson's office this morning to talk over a case in which I'm interested."

"I remember now what he said about you. He said you really were a fine lawyer, but that you liked to read about pirates."

"That may have been what he said to you; but he has told me that the association of piracy and law was most unfortunate, as it would suggest unpleasant comments to those who don't admire the legal profession."

"And you are one of those tide-water Griswolds, then, if you know the Randolph Wilsons. They are very strong for the tide-water families; to hear them talk you'd think the people back in the Virginia hills weren't really respectable."

"It's undeniably the right view of the matter," laughed Griswold, "but now that I live in Charlottesville I don't insist on it. It wouldn't be decent in me. And I have lots of cousins in Lexington and through the Valley. The broad view is that every inch of the Old Dominion is holy ground."

"It is an interesting commonwealth, Mr. Griswold; but I do not consider it holy ground. South Carolina has a monopoly of that;" and then the smile left her face and she returned to the telegram. "Our immediate business, however, is not with Virginia, or with South Carolina, but with the miserable commonwealth that lies between."

"And that commonwealth," said Griswold, wishing to prolong the respite from official cares, "that state known in law and history as North Carolina, I have heard called, by a delightful North Carolina lady I met once at Charlottesville, a valley of humility between two mountains of conceit. That seems to hit both of us!"

"North Carolina isn't a state at all," Miss Osborne declared spitefully; "it's only a strip of land where uninteresting people live. And now, what do you say to this telegram?"

"Excellent. It's bound to irritate, and it leaves him

in the dark as to our—I mean Governor Osborne's—intentions. And those intentions—"

During this by-play he had reached a decision as to what should be done, and he was prepared to answer when she asked, with an employment of the pronoun that pleasantly emphasized their relationship:

"What *are* our intentions?"

"We are going to catch Appleweight, that's the first thing—and until we get him we're going to keep our own counsel. Let me have a telegraph blank and I will try my hand at being governor." He sat down in the governor's chair, asked the name of the county seat of Mingo and wrote without erasure or hesitation this message:

To the Sheriff of Mingo County,
Turner Court House, S. C.:

Make every possible effort to capture Appleweight and any of his gang who are abroad in your county. Swear in all the deputies you need, and if friendliness of citizens to outlaws makes this impossible wire me immediately, and I will send militia. Any delay on your part will be visited with severest penalties. Answer immediately by telegraph.

CHARLES OSBORNE,
Governor of South Carolina.

"That's quite within the law," said Griswold, hand-

ing Barbara the message; "and we might as well put the thing through at a gallop. I'll get the telegraph company to hold open the line to Turner Court House until the sheriff answers."

As Barbara read the message he saw her pleasure in the quick compression of her lips, the glow in her cheeks, and then the bright glint of her bronze-brown eyes as she finished.

"That's exactly right. I didn't know just how to manage such a thing, but I see that that is the proper method."

"Yes; the sheriff must have his full opportunity to act."

"And what then, if the sheriff refuses to do anything?"

"Then—then"—and Griswold's jaw set firmly, and he straightened himself slightly before he added in a quiet tone—"then I'm going down there to take charge of the thing myself."

"Oh, that is too much! I *didn't* ask that; and I must refuse to let you take any such responsibility on yourself, to say nothing of the personal danger. I merely wanted your advice—as a lawyer, for the reason that I

dared not risk father's name even among his best friends here. And your coming to the office this morning seemed so—so providential—"

He sought at once to minimize the value of his services, for he was not a man to place a woman under obligations, and, moreover, an opportunity like this, to uphold the dignity, and perhaps to exercise the power of a state, laid strong hold upon him. He knew little enough about the Appleweight case, but he felt from his slight knowledge that he was well within his rights in putting spurs to the sheriff of Mingo County. If the sheriff failed to respond in proper spirit and it became necessary to use the militia, he was conscious that serious complications might arise. He had not only a respect for law, but an ideal of civic courage and integrity, and the governor's inexplicable absence aroused his honest wrath. The idea that a mere girl should be forced to sustain the official honor and dignity of a cowardly father further angered him. And then he looked into her eyes and saw how grave they were, and how earnest and with what courage she met the situation; and the charm of her slender figure, that glint of gold in her hair, her slim, supple hands folded on the

table—these things wrought in him a happiness that he had never known before, so that he laughed as he took the telegram from her.

"There must be no mistake, no failure," she said quietly.

"We are not going to fail; we are going to carry this through! Within three days we'll have Appleweight in a North Carolina jail or a flying fugitive in Governor Dangerfield's territory. And now these telegrams must be sent. It might be better for you to go to the telegraph office with me. You must remember that I am a pilgrim and a stranger and they might question my filing official messages."

"That is perfectly true. I will go into town with you."

"And if there's an official coach that everybody knows as yours, it would allay suspicions to have it," and while he was still speaking she vanished to order the carriage.

In five minutes it was at the side door, and Griswold and Barbara, fortified by the presence of Phœbe, left the governor's study.

"If they don't know me, everybody in South Carolina knows Phœbe," said Barbara.

"A capital idea. I can see by her eye that she's built for conspiracy."

Griswold's horse was to be returned to town by a boy; and when this had been arranged the three entered the carriage.

"The telegraph office, Tom; and hurry."

CHAPTER VII

AN AFFAIR AT THE STATE HOUSE

Barbara filed the messages herself with the manager of the telegraph company, who lifted the green shade from his eyes and smiled upon her.

"We'll rush them, Miss Osborne. Shall I telephone the answers if they come to-night? No; your father likes his telegrams delivered, I remember."

"I will call for them," said Griswold. "Governor Osborne was only at home a few hours this evening and he left me in charge of these matters."

The manager's face expressed surprise.

"Oh! I didn't know the governor was at home," he remarked, as he finished counting the words and charging them against the state's account. "I will send them myself, and ask the operators at the other end to look lively about the answers. You are Mr.—"

"This is Major Griswold," said Barbara, conferring the title with a vague feeling that it strengthened her cause.

"Major," repeated the manager, and he nodded to Griswold with an air that implied his familiarity with official secrets. "You will call? In a couple of hours, Major."

As Barbara and Griswold turned to leave, a young man who had been writing a message at the standing desk in the lobby lifted his hat and addressed Barbara. He was a reporter for the Columbia *Intelligencer,* and his manner was eager.

"Oh, Miss Osborne, pardon me, but I've been trying to get you on the telephone. Can you tell me where your father is to-night?"

"Father was in town only a few hours, and then left on state business."

The young man glanced from one to the other. He was a polite youngster and Miss Barbara Osborne was—Miss Barbara Osborne, and this, to the people of South Carolina, was a fact of weight. Still the reporter twirled his hat uncertainly.

"Well, I thought I had met all the trains, but I guess I missed the governor."

"No; you didn't miss him," smiled Barbara. "Father drove in from the country and went back the same way. He didn't come into town at all."

The news instinct is the keenest with which man may be blessed, and the reporter scented events. Griswold, seeing the light flash in the young man's eye, felt that here was an opportunity to allay public criticism.

"Governor Osborne is engaged upon important public business. He will be absent from town for a day—perhaps a week. He will not return to Columbia until the business is thoroughly disposed of."

"May I ask if it's the Appleweight case? The Raleigh papers have wired for information and we'd like to know here."

"I can not answer that question. It's enough that the governor is absent on state business, and that the business is important. You may print that in the *Intelligencer* and repeat it to Raleigh. There is no harm in that, is there, Miss Osborne?"

"No; certainly not," Barbara replied.

"But the papers all over the state are talking about the Appleweight gang. They intimate that those people enjoy immunity from prosecution and that the governor —you will pardon me, Miss Osborne—will take no steps to arrest them for personal reasons."

"Your question is quite proper," replied Griswold. "The governor's acts are subject to scrutiny at all times

and it is just as well to have this matter understood now. I am employed by the governor as special counsel in some state matters. My name is Griswold. Take out your book and come to the desk here and I will give you a statement which you may publish as by the authority of the governor."

The three found seats at a table and Griswold dictated while the reporter wrote, Barbara meanwhile sitting with her cheek resting against her raised hand. She was experiencing the relief we all know, of finding a strong arm to lean upon in an emergency, and she realized that Griswold was not only wise, but shrewd and resourceful.

"Please print this exactly as I give it: It having been intimated in certain quarters that the Appleweight gang of outlaws, which has been terrorizing the North Carolina frontier for several years, enjoys immunity from prosecution in South Carolina owing to the fact that Governor Osborne was at some time attorney for Appleweight, Governor Osborne begs to say that steps have already been taken for the arrest of this man and his followers, dead or alive. The governor presents his compliments to those amiable critics who have so eagerly seized upon this pretext for slurring his private charac-

ter and aspersing his official acts. The governor has no apologies to proffer the people of South Carolina, who have so generously reposed in him their trust and confidence. He is intent upon safe-guarding the peace, dignity and honor of the state through an honest enforcement of law and he has no other aim or ambition."

Griswold took the reporter's note-book and read over this pronunciamiento; then he handed it to Barbara, who studied it carefully.

"I think that sounds just right, only, why not substitute for 'honest' the word 'vigorous'?"

"Excellent," assented Griswold, and thus amended the statement was returned to the reporter.

"Now," said Griswold to the young man, "you are getting a pretty good item that no other paper will have. Please wire your story to Raleigh; Governor Osborne is very anxious that the people up there shall understand fully his attitude in the Appleweight matter."

"I reckon this will wake up old Dangerfield all right," said the reporter, grinning. "He'll be paralyzed. May I use your name in this connection, sir?"

"Not at all. My engagement with Governor Osborne is of the most confidential character and our purposes would be defeated by publicity. Remember, you get the

exclusive use of this story—the return and immediate departure of the governor, his statement to the people in the Appleweight case—all with the understanding that you use what you have to the best advantage."

"This is all right, is it, Miss Osborne?" asked the reporter.

"Major Griswold has full authority to act, and you need question nothing he tells you," Barbara replied.

"I suppose the governor didn't see the attorney-general to-day?" asked the reporter detainingly, as Barbara rose. She exchanged a glance with Griswold.

"Father didn't see Mr. Bosworth at all, if that's what you mean!"

"Didn't see him? Well, Bosworth didn't exactly tell me he had seen him to-day, but I asked him about the Appleweight case an hour ago at his house and he said the governor wasn't going to do anything and that was the end of it so far as the administration is concerned."

"Print his story and see what happens! We have no comment to make on that, have we, Miss Osborne?"

"Nothing at all," replied Barbara scornfully.

"I'm at the Saluda House at present. See me to-morrow and I may have another story for you!" and

Griswold shook the reporter warmly by the hand as they parted at the carriage door.

"Home," said Barbara for the reporter's benefit, and then, to Griswold: "I must speak of another matter. Drive with me a little way until we can throw the reporter off."

She spoke quietly, but he saw that she was preoccupied with some new phase of the situation, and as the carriage gained headway she said earnestly:

"That young man told the truth—I am sure of it—about Mr. Bosworth. I knew he would do something to injure father if he could, but I did not know he had the courage to go so far."

"It's only politics, Miss Osborne," said Griswold lightly. "Besides, you may be sure the *Intelligencer* will print the governor's side of it in its largest type."

"No; it is not politics. It is more despicable, more contemptible, more ungenerous even than politics. But he shall be punished, humiliated for his conduct."

"You shall fix his punishment yourself!" laughed Griswold; "but the state's business first. We have a little more to do before I am satisfied with the day's work."

"Yes, of course. We must leave nothing undone that father would do were he here to act for himself."

"We must be even more careful in his absence to safeguard his honor than the case really requires. We not only have his public responsibility but our own into the bargain in so far as we speak and act for him. And there's always the state—the Palmetto flag must be kept flying at the masthead." Their eyes met as they passed under an electric lamp and he saw how completely she was relying on his guidance.

They were now at the edge of town and she bade him stop the carriage.

"We must go to the state house," said Griswold. "We must get that requisition, to guard against treason in the citadel. Assuming that Governor Osborne really doesn't want to see Appleweight punished we'd better hold the requisition anyhow. It's possible that your father had it ready—do pardon me!—for a grand-stand play, or he may have wanted to bring Appleweight into the friendlier state;—but that's all conjectural. We'd better keep out of the principal streets. That reporter has a sharp eye."

She gave the necessary directions and the driver turned back into Columbia. It was pleasant to find his

accomplice in this conspiracy a girl of keen wit who did not debate matters or ask tiresome questions. The business ahead was serious enough, though he tried by manner, tone and words to minimize its gravity. If the attorney-general was serving a personal spite, or whatever the cause of his attitude, he might go far in taking advantage of the governor's absence. Griswold's relation to the case was equivocal enough, he fully realized; but the very fact of its being without precedent, and so beset with pitfalls for all concerned, was a spur to action. In the present instance a duly executed requisition for the apprehension of a criminal, which could not be replaced if lost, must be held at all hazards, and Griswold had determined to make sure of the governor's warrant before he slept.

"Have you the office keys?" he asked.

"Yes; I have been afraid to let go of them. There's a watchman in the building, but he knows me very well. There will not be the slightest trouble about getting in."

The watchman—an old Confederate veteran—sat smoking in the entrance and courteously bade them good evening.

"I want to get some papers from father's office, Captain."

"Certainly, Miss Barbara." He preceded them, throwing on the lights, to the governor's door, which he opened with his own pass key. "It's pretty lonesome here at night, Miss Barbara."

"I suppose nobody comes at night," remarked Griswold.

"Not usually, sir. But one or two students are at work in the library, and Mr. Bosworth is in his office."

The veteran walked away jingling his keys. Barbara was already in the private office bending over the governor's desk. She found the right key, drew out a drawer, then cried out softly. She knelt beside the desk, throwing the papers about in her eagerness, then turned to Griswold with a white face.

"The drawer has been opened since I was here this morning. The requisition and all the other papers in the case are gone."

Griswold examined the lock carefully and pointed to the roughened edges of the wood.

"A blade of the shears there, or perhaps the paper cutter—who knows? The matter is simple enough, so please do not trouble about it. Wait here a moment. I want to make some inquiries of the watchman."

He found the old fellow pacing the portico like a

sentry. He pointed out the attorney-general's office, threw on a few additional lights for Griswold's guidance, and resumed his patrol duty outside.

The attorney-general's door was locked, but in response to Griswold's knock it was opened guardedly.

"I am very sorry to trouble you, Mr. Bosworth," began Griswold, quietly edging his way into the room, "but one never gets wholly away from business these days."

He closed the door himself, and peered into the inner rooms to be sure the attorney-general was alone. Bosworth's face flushed angrily when he found that a stranger had thus entered his office with a cool air of proprietorship; then he stared blankly at Griswold for a moment before he recalled where he had seen him before.

"I don't receive visitors at night," he blurted, laying his hand on the door. "I'm engaged, and you'll have to come in office hours."

He shook the door as though to call Griswold's attention to it.

"Do you see this thing—it's the door!" he roared.

"I have seen it from both sides, Mr. Bosworth. I intend to stay on this side until I get ready to go."

"Who the devil are you? What do you mean by coming here at this time of night?"

"I'm a lawyer myself, if you will force the ignoble truth from me. Now, when you are perfectly quiet, and once more the sane, reasonable human being you must be to have been trusted with the office you hold, we'll proceed to business. Meanwhile, please put on your coat. A man in his shirt-sleeves is always at a disadvantage; and we Virginians are sticklers for the proprieties."

The attorney-general's fury abated when he saw that he had to deal with a low-voiced young man who seemed unlikely to yield to intimidation. Griswold had, in fact, seated himself on a table that was otherwise covered with law books, and he sniffed with pleasure the familiar atmosphere of dusty law calf, which no one who has had the slightest acquaintance with a law office ever forgets. To his infinite amusement Bosworth was actually putting on his coat, though it may have been a little absent-mindedly to give him an opportunity to decide upon a plan for getting rid of his visitor. However this may have been, Bosworth now stepped to the side of the room and snatched down the telephone receiver.

Griswold caught him by the shoulder and flung him round.

"None of that! By calling the police you will only get yourself into trouble. I'm bigger than you are and I should hate to have to throw you out of the window. Now"—and he caught and hung up the receiver, which was wildly banging the wall—"now let us be sensible and get down to business."

"Who the devil are you?" demanded Bosworth, glaring.

"I'm special counsel for Governor Osborne in the Appleweight case. There's no use in wasting time in further identification, but if you take down that volume on Admiralty Practice just behind you, you will find my name on the title page. Or, to save you the trouble, as you seem to be interested in my appearance, I will tell you that my name is Griswold and that my address is Charlottesville, Virginia."

"You are undoubtedly lying. If you are smart enough to write a book you ought to know enough about legal procedure to understand that the attorney-general represents the state and special counsel would not be chosen without his knowledge."

"Allow me to correct you, my learned brother. You should never misquote the opposing counsel—it's one of the rules of the game. What I said a moment ago was

that I represented the governor—Governor Osborne. I didn't say I represented the state, which is a different matter, and beset with *ultra vires* pitfalls. There is no earthly reason why a governor should not detach himself, so to speak, from his office and act *in propria persona,* as a mere citizen. His right to private remedy is not abridged by the misfortune of office-holding. Whether he can himself be made defendant in an action at law touches that ancient question, whether the monarch or the state can be sued. That's a question law students have debated from the beginning of time, but we must not confuse it with the case at issue. The governor, as a citizen, may certainly employ such counsel as he pleases, and just now I represent him. Of course, if you want me to furnish a brief—"

Griswold's manner was deliberate and ingratiating. He saw that the attorney-general had not the slightest sense of humor and that his play upon legal phrases was wasted. Bosworth grinned, but not at the legal status of monarchs and states. He had thought of a clever stroke and he dealt the blow with confidence.

"Let us assume," he said, "that you represent Mr. Osborne. May I ask the whereabouts of your client?"

"Certainly. You may ask anything you please, but

it will do you no good. It's an old rule of the game never to divulge a client's secret. Governor Osborne has his own reasons for absenting himself from his office. However, he was at home to-night."

"I rather guess not, as I had all the trains watched. You'll have to do a lot better than that, Mr. Griswold."

"He has issued a statement to the public since you lied to the *Intelligencer* reporter about him to-day. I suppose it's part of your official duty to misrepresent the head of the state administration in the press, but the governor is in the saddle and I advise you to be good."

The attorney-general felt that he was not making headway. His disadvantage in dealing with a stranger whose identity he still questioned angered him. He did not know why Griswold had sought him out, and he was chagrined at having allowed himself to be so easily cornered.

"You seem to know a good deal," he sneered. "How did you get into this thing anyhow?"

"My dear sir, I was chosen by the governor because of my superior attainments, don't you see? But I'm in a hurry now. I came here on a particular errand. I want that requisition in the Appleweight case—quick!—if you please, Mr. Bosworth."

He jumped down from the table and took up his hat and stick.

"Mr. Griswold, or whoever you are, you are either a fool or a blackguard. There isn't any requisition for Appleweight. The governor never had the sand to issue any, if you must know the truth! If you knew anything about the governor you would know that that's why Osborne is hiding himself. He can't afford to offend the Appleweights, if you must know the disagreeable truth. Your coming here and asking me for that requisition is funny, if you had the brains to see it. Poor old Osborne is scared to death and I doubt if he's within a hundred miles of here. You don't know the governor; I do! He's a dodger, a trimmer and a coward."

"Mr. Bosworth," began Griswold deliberately, "that requisition, duly signed and bearing the seal of the secretary of state as by the statutes in such cases made and provided, was in Governor Osborne's desk this morning at the time you were so daintily kicking the door in your anxiety to see the governor. It has since been taken from the drawer where the governor left it when he went to New Orleans. You have gone in there like a sneak-thief, pried open the drawer and stolen that document; and now—"

"It's an ugly charge," mocked the attorney-general.

"It's all of that," and Griswold smiled.

"But you forget that you represent Mr. Osborne. On the other hand I represent Governor Osborne, and if I want the Appleweight papers I had every right to them."

"After office hours, feloniously and with criminal intent?" laughed Griswold.

"We will assume that I have them," sneered Bosworth, "and such being the case I will return them only to the governor."

"Then,"—and Griswold's smile broadened—"if it comes to concessions, I will grant that you are within your rights in wishing to place them in the governor's own hands. The governor of South Carolina is now, so to speak, *in camera.*"

"The governor is hiding. He's afraid to come to Columbia, and the whole state knows it."

"The papers, my friend; and I will satisfy you that the governor of South Carolina is under this roof and transacting business."

"Here in the state house?" demanded Bosworth, and he blanched and twisted the buttons of his coat nervously.

"The governor of South Carolina, the supreme power of the state, charged with full responsibility, enjoying all the immunities, rights and privileges unto him belonging."

It was clear that Bosworth took no stock whatever in Griswold's story; but Griswold's pretended employment by the governor and his apparent knowledge of the governor's affairs, piqued his curiosity. If this was really the Griswold who had written a widely accepted work on admiralty and who was known to him by reputation as a brilliant lawyer of Virginia, the mystery was all the deeper. By taking the few steps necessary to reach the governor's chambers he would prove the falsity of Griswold's pretensions to special knowledge of the governor's whereabouts and plans. He stepped to an inner office, came back with a packet of papers and thrust a revolver into his pocket with so vain a show of it that Griswold laughed aloud.

"What! Do you still back your arguments with firearms down here? It's a method that has gone out of fashion in Virginia!"

"If there's a trick in this it will be the worse for you," scowled Bosworth.

"And pray, remember on your side, that you are to

give those documents into the hands of the governor. Come along."

They met the watchman in the corridor and he saluted them and passed on. Bosworth strode eagerly forward in his anxiety to prick the bubble of Griswold's pretensions.

Griswold threw open the door of the governor's reception-room, and they blinked in the stronger light that poured in from the private office. There, in the governor's chair by the broad official desk, sat Barbara Osborne reading a newspaper.

"Your Excellency," said Griswold, bowing gravely and advancing; "I beg to present the attorney-general!"

"Barbara!"

The papers fell from the attorney-general's hands. He stood staring until astonishment began to yield to rage as he realized that a trap had been sprung upon him. The girl had risen instantly and a smile played about her lips for a moment. She had vaguely surmised that Griswold would charge Bosworth with the loss of the papers, but her associate in the conspiracy had now given a turn to the matter that amused her.

"Barbara!" blurted the attorney-general, "what game is this—what contemptible trick is this stranger play-

ing on you? Don't you understand that your father's absence is a most serious matter and that in the present condition of this Appleweight affair it is likely to involve him and the state in scandal?"

Barbara regarded him steadily for a moment with a negative sort of gaze. She took a step forward before she spoke and then she asked quickly and sharply:

"What have you done, Mr. Bosworth, to avert these calamities, and what was in your mind when you pried open the drawer and took out those papers?"

"I was going to use the requisition—"

"How?"

"Why, I expected—"

"Mr. Bosworth expected to effect a *coup* for his own glory during the governor's absence," suggested Griswold.

"How?" and Barbara's voice rang imperiously and her eyes flashed.

"Send this unknown person, this impostor and meddler, away and I will talk to you as old friends may talk together," and he glared fiercely at Griswold, who stood fanning himself with his hat.

"I asked you how you intended to serve my father, Mr. Bosworth, because you sent me this afternoon a

letter in which you threatened me—you threatened me with my father's ruin if I did not marry you. You would take advantage of my trouble and anxiety to force that question on me when I had answered it once and for all long ago. Before this stranger I want to tell you that you are a despicable coward and that if you think you can humiliate me or my father or the state by such practices as you have resorted to you are very greatly mistaken. And further, Mr. Bosworth, if I find you interfering again in this matter I shall print that letter you wrote me to-day in every newspaper in the state! Now, that is all I have to say to you, and I hope never to see you again."

"Before you go, Mr. Bosworth," said Griswold, "I wish to say that Miss Osborne has spoken of your conduct with altogether too much restraint. I shall add, on my own account, that if I find you meddling again in this Appleweight case, I shall first procure your removal from office and after that I shall take the greatest pleasure in flogging you within an inch of your life. Now go!"

The two had dismissed him, and before Bosworth's step died away in the hall, Griswold was running his eye over the papers.

"That man will do something nasty if he is clever enough to think of anything."

"He's a disgusting person," said Barbara, touching her forehead with her handkerchief.

"He's all of that," remarked Griswold, as he retied the red-tape round the packet of papers. "And now, before we leave we may as well face a serious proposition. Your father's absence and this fiction we are maintaining that he is really here can not be maintained forever. I don't want to trouble you, for you, of course, realize all this as keenly as I. But what do you suppose actually happened at New Orleans between your father and the governor of North Carolina?"

She leaned against her father's desk, her hands lightly resting on its flat surface. She was wholly serene now, and she smiled and then laughed.

"It couldn't have been what the governor of North Carolina said to the governor of South Carolina in the old story, for father is strongly opposed to drink of all kinds. And in the story—"

"I've forgotten where that story originated."

"Well, it happened a long time ago, and nobody really knows the origin. But according to tradition, at the crisis of a great row between two governors, the ice was

broken by the governor of North Carolina saying to the governor of South Carolina those shocking words about it's being a long time between drinks. What makes the New Orleans incident so remarkable is that father and Governor Dangerfield have always been friends, though I never cared very much for the Dangerfields myself. The only tiffs they have had have been purely for effect. When father said that the people of North Carolina would never amount to anything so long as they fry their meat it was only his joke with Governor Dangerfield—but it did make North Carolina awfully mad. And Jerry—she's the governor's daughter—refused to visit me last winter just on that account. Jerry Dangerfield's a nice little girl, but she has no sense of humor."

CHAPTER VIII

THE LABORS OF MR. ARDMORE

While he waited for Miss Jerry Dangerfield to appear Mr. Thomas Ardmore read for the first time the constitution of the United States. He had reached the governor's office early, and, seeking diversion, he had picked up a small volume that bore some outward resemblance to a novel. This proved, however, to be Johnston's *American Politics,* and he was amazed to find that this diminutive work contained the answers to a great many questions which had often perplexed him, but which he had imagined could not be answered except by statesmen or by men like his friend Griswold, who spent their lives in study.

He had supposed that the constitution of a great nation like the United States would fill many volumes, and be couched in terms bewildering and baffling; and it was perhaps the proudest moment in Mr. Ardmore's life when, in the cool and quiet of the May morning, in

the historic chambers of the governor of North Carolina, it dawned upon him that the charter of American liberty filled hardly more space than the stipulations for a yacht race, or a set of foot-ball rules; and that, moreover, he understood the greater part of it, or thought he did. Such strange words as "attainder" and "capitation" he sought out in the dictionary, and this also gave him a new sensation and thrill of pleasure at finding the machinery of knowledge so simple. He made note of several matters he wished to ask Griswold about when they met again; then turned back into the body of the text and had read as far as Burr's conspiracy when Jerry came breezily in. He experienced for the first time in his life that obsession of guilt which sinks in shame the office-boy who is caught reading a dime novel. Jerry seemed to tower above him like an avenging angel, and though her sword was only a parasol, her words cut deep enough.

"Well, you are taking it pretty cool!"

"Taking what?" faltered Ardmore, standing up, and seeking to hide the book behind his back.

"Why, this outrageous article!" and she thrust a newspaper under his eyes. "Do you mean to say you haven't seen the morning paper?"

"To tell you the truth, Miss Dangerfield, I hardly ever read the papers."

"What's that you were reading when I came in?" she demanded severely, withholding the paper until she should be answered.

"It's a book about the government, and the powers reserved to the states and that sort of thing. I was just reading the constitution; I thought it might help us—I mean *you*—in your work."

"The constitution help me? Hasn't it occurred to you before this that what I'm doing is all against the constitution and the revised statutes and all those books you see on the shelf there?"

"But the constitution sounds all right. It seems remarkably reasonable. You couldn't ask anything fairer than that!"

"So are the ten commandments fair enough; but you're on the wrong track, Mr. Ardmore, if you're trying to support the present administration with stupid things in books. I don't follow precedents, Mr. Ardmore; I create them."

"But I should think you would have to be awfully careful not to mix up the business of the executive and judicial branches of the government. I think I heard

Grissy speak of that once, though I'm not certain. Grissy knows more than almost any other living man."

"I don't doubt that your friend is a well-educated person, but in times like these you've got to rise above the constitution; and just now it's more convenient to forget it. There's a constitution of North Carolina, too, if you're looking for constitutions, but in good society such things are not mentioned. Papa always refers to the constitution with tears in his eyes when he's making speeches, but papa's very emotional. If I could make a speech I should tell the people what I think of them—that they're too silly and stupid for words."

"You are right, Miss Dangerfield. I have felt exactly that way about the people ever since I was defeated for alderman in New York. But let me have the paper."

She turned to the morning mail while he read, and opened the envelopes rapidly. Such of the letters as she thought interesting or important she put aside, and when Ardmore finished reading a double-leaded telegram from Columbia, in which the governor of South Carolina was quoted as declaring his intention of taking immediate steps for the apprehension of Appleweight, she was still reading and sorting letters, tapping her cheek lightly meanwhile with the official paper-knife.

"Here, Mr. Ardmore," she said, drawing a paper from her pocket, "is the answer to that telegram we sent yesterday evening. Suppose you read that next, and we can then decide what to do."

She was making the letters into little piles, humming softly meanwhile; but he felt that there was a storm brewing. He read the message from Columbia a number of times, and if the acting governor had not been so ominously quiet he would have laughed at the terse sentences.

"There must be a mistake about this. He wouldn't have used 'diverting' that way; that's insulting!"

"So you appreciate its significance, do you, Mr. Ardmore? The iron enters your soul, does it? You realize that I have been insulted, do you?"

"I shouldn't put it that way, Miss Dangerfield. Governor Osborne would never have sent a message like that to you—he thought he was sending it to your father."

"He's insulted me and every other citizen in the Old North State; that's who he's insulted, Mr. Ardmore. Let me read it again;" and she repeated the telegram aloud:

"'Your extremely diverting telegram in Appleweight case received and filed.' I think it's the *extremely* that's

so perfectly mean. The *diverting* by itself would not hurt my feelings half so much. He's a good deal smarter man than I thought he was to think up a telegram like that. But what do you think of that piece in the newspaper?"

"He says he's going to catch Appleweight dead or alive. That sounds pretty serious."

"I think it's a bluff myself. That telegram we sent him yesterday must have scared him to death. He was driven into a corner and had to do something to avoid being disgraced, and it's easy enough to talk big in the newspapers when you haven't the slightest intention of doing anything at all. I've noticed that father talks the longest and loudest about things he doesn't believe at all."

"Is it possible?" whispered Ardmore incredulously.

"Of course it's possible! Father would never have been elected if he'd expressed his real sentiments; neither would anybody else ever be elected if he said beforehand what he really believed."

"That must have been the reason I got defeated for alderman on the reform ticket. I told 'em I was for turning the rascals out."

"That was very stupid of you. You've got to get the

rascals to elect you first; then if you're tired of office and don't need them any more you bounce them. But that's political practice; it's a theory we've got to work out now. Governor Osborne's telegram is much more important than his interview in the newspapers, which is just for effect and of no importance at all. He doesn't say the same things in the telegram to father that he said to the reporter. A governor who really meant to do anything wouldn't be so ready to insult another governor. The newspapers are a lot of bother. I spent all yesterday evening talking to reporters. They came to the house to ask where papa was and when he would be home!"

"What did you tell them?"

"I didn't tell them anything. I sent out for two other girls and we all just talked to them and kept talking, and gave them lemon sherbet and ginger cookies; and Eva Hungerford played the banjo—you don't know Eva? Of course you don't know anybody, and I don't want you to, for it would spoil you for private secretary. But Eva is simply killing when she gets to cutting up, and we made those reporters sing to us, and all they say in the papers, even the opposition papers, this morning is that Governor Dangerfield is in Savannah visiting

an old friend. They all tell the same story, so they must have fixed it up after they left the house. But what were you doing, Mr. Ardmore, that you didn't come around to help? It seems to me you don't appreciate the responsibilities of being secretary to a governor."

"I was afraid you might scold me if I did. And besides I was glued to the long distance telephone all evening, talking to my manager at Ardsley. He read me my letters and a lot of telegrams that annoyed me very much. I wish you wouldn't be so hard on me, for I have trifling troubles of my own."

"I didn't suppose you ever had troubles; you certainly don't act as though you ever had."

"No one who has never been brother-in-law to a duke has the slightest idea of what trouble is."

"I've seen the Duke of Ballywinkle's picture in the papers and he looks very attractive."

"Well, if you'd ever seen him eat celery you'd change your mind. He's going down to Ardsley to visit me; for sheer nerve I must say my relations beat the world. I got my place over here in North Carolina just to get away from them, and now my sister—not the duchess, but Mrs. Atchison—is coming down there with a lot of girls and Ballywinkle has attached himself to the party.

They'll pass through here to-day, and they'll expect to find me at Ardsley."

"If the duke's really coming to our state I suppose we ought to recognize him officially," and Jerry's eyes were large with reverie as she pondered her possible duty.

"Do something for him!" blazed Ardmore. "I hope *you* don't labor under the delusion that a duke's any better than anybody else? If you'd suffered what I have from being related to a duke you'd be sorry to hear he was even passing through your state, much less stopping off for a couple of weeks."

"Because you don't like him is no reason why every one else should feel the same way, is it? I've read about the Duke of Ballywinkle and he belongs to one of the oldest families in England, and I've seen pictures of Ballywinkle Castle—"

"Worse than that," grinned Ardmore with rising humor, "I had to chip in to pay for it! And the plumbing isn't yet what it ought to be. The last time I was over there I caught cold and nearly died of pneumonia. I make it a rule now never to visit dukes. You never know what you'll strike when you stay in those ancestral castles, even when they've been restored with some silly

American girl's grandfather's money. Those places are all full of drafts and malaria and ghosts, and they make you drink tea in the afternoon, which is worse than being haunted."

"I suppose we might invite his Grace to inspect our militia," persisted Jerry. "It would sound well in the papers to have a real duke inspect the North Carolina troops."

"It would sound better than he would look doing it, I can tell you that. Old Wellington may have been all right, but these new dukes were never made for horseback."

"He might appear in a carriage, wearing his orders and ride the lines that way, with all the troops presenting arms."

"Or you might pin his debts on him and mount him on a goat on the rifle-range and let the sharp-shooters pepper away at him! Please let us not talk about Ballywinkle any more; the thought of him gives me that sinking feeling."

He had opened an atlas and was poring over it with a magnifying glass.

"It's positively funny," he murmured, laughing a little to himself, "but I know something about this coun-

try over here. Here's Ardsley, in the far corner of Dilwell County, and here's Kildare."

"Yes; I understand maps. Dilwell is green, and there's the state line, and that ugly watery sort of yellow is Mingo County, South Carolina, and Turner Court House is the county seat of it. Those little black marks are hills on the border, and it's right there that these Appleweight people live, and dance on the state line as though it were a skipping-rope."

"That's exactly it. Now what we want to do is to arrest Appleweight and put him in jail in South Carolina, which relieves the governor of North Carolina, your honored father, of all embarrassment."

She snatched the paper-cutter and took possession of the map for a moment, then pointed, with a happy little laugh.

"Why, that will be only too easy. You see there's Azbell County, where the militia is encamped, just three counties away from Dilwell, and if we needed the soldiers it wouldn't hurt the troops to march that far, would it?"

"Hurt them, nothing!" exclaimed Ardmore. "It will be good for them. You have to give orders to the adjutant-general, and, being engaged to him, he would

be afraid not to obey your orders, even if you told him to go in balloons."

"Well, of course, I'd send him an official order; and if he was disobedient I could break our engagement. When I broke my engagement with Arthur Treadmeasure, it was only because he was five minutes late coming to take me to a dance."

"You were perfectly right, Miss Dangerfield. No gentleman would keep you waiting."

"But he didn't keep me waiting! I was sick in bed with a sore throat, and mama wouldn't let me go; but I thought it was very careless and taking too much for granted for him to think he could come poking along any time he pleased, so I ended everything."

It would have interested Ardmore to know the total of Miss Dangerfield's engagements, but the time did not seem propitious for such inquiries; and, moreover, his awe of her as a young person of great determination and force of character increased. She spoke of employing the armed forces of the state as though playing with the militia were a cheerful pastime, like horseback riding or tennis. His heart sank as he foresaw the possibility of the gallant Gillingwater coming out of the Appleweight affair with flying colors, a hero knighted on the field

for valor. The remembrance of Gillingwater receiving the salutes of the militia and riding off to the wars to the beat of drums had deprived Ardmore of sleep all night.

"Well, there's the map, and there's that insulting telegram; what are you going to do about it?" asked Jerry.

She seemed to be honestly inviting suggestions, and the very thought of this affected him like wine. He deliberated for several minutes, while she watched him. A delicious country quiet lay upon the old state house; in the tranquil park outside the birds whistled their high disdain of law and precedent. It was no small thing to be identified with a great undertaking like this, with the finest girl in the world; and he could not help thinking of the joy of telling Griswold, the sober professor and sedate lawyer, of this adventure when it should be happily concluded. Never again should Grissy taunt him with his supineness before the open door of opportunity!

"A governor," he began, "is always a dignified person who doesn't bother his head about little things like this unless everybody else has gone to sleep. Now, who's the chief of police in a county like Dilwell—what do you call him?"

"Do you mean the sheriff, Mr. Ardmore?"

"Certainly. Now, give me those telegraph blanks, and I'll drop him a few lines to let him know that the government at Raleigh still lives."

It is in the telegram alone that we Americans approach style. Our great commanders did much to form it; our business strategists took the key from them. "I propose to fight it out on this line, if it takes all summer" is not more admirable than "Cancel order our number six hundred and eighteen," or "Have drawn at sight." Through the most familiar and commonplace apparatus clicks and ticks the great American epic in phrases concise, unequivocal and apt. Von Moltke, roused at night with news of war, merely waved his hand to the long-prepared orders in his chiffonier and went to sleep again; but the great Prussian has his counterpart in the American magnate who ties up a railroad by telegraph over his after-dinner coffee. Telegrams were, however, with Mr. Thomas Ardmore, something more than a form of communication or a mere literary exercise. Letter-writing seemed to him the most formidable of human undertakings, but with a pad of telegraph blanks under his hand his spirit soared free. All untrammeled by the horror of the day tariff, whose steep slopes have wrought

so much confusion and error among the economical, he gave to the wires and the wireless what he never would have confided to a stamp. He wrote and submitted to Miss Jerry Dangerfield the following:

To the Sheriff of Dilwell County,
Kildare, N. C.:

What is this I hear about your inability to catch Appleweight and the rest of his bunch? Your inattention to your duties is a matter of common scandal, and if you don't get anxious pretty soon I shall remove you from your job and then some. I shall be down soon to see whether you are pitching quoits at the blacksmith shop or fishing for lobsters in Raccoon Creek, instead of attending to your knitting. Your conduct has annoyed me until I am something more than vexed by your behavior. The eyes of the great North State are upon you. Wire me at length just what you propose doing or not doing in this matter.

WILLIAM DANGERFIELD,
Governor of North Carolina.

"What do you think of that?" he asked, his pride falling as she scanned the paper carefully.

"Isn't it pretty expensive?" Jerry inquired, counting the words to ten and then roughly computing the rest.

"I'll take care of that, Miss Dangerfield. What I want to know is whether you think that will make the sheriff sit up."

"Well, here's what father sent him only about a week

ago. I found it in his private letter book, and it's marked confidential in red ink."

She read:

"'Act cautiously in Appleweight case. Indictment by grand jury is undoubtedly faulty and Foster threatens trouble in case parties are arrested.'

"And there's more like that! Papa never intended to do anything, that's as plain as daylight. Mr. Foster, the treasurer, comes from that county. He thought papa was going to have to do something, so he's holding back the payment of the state bonds just to frighten papa. You see, the state owes the Bronx Loan and Trust Company that two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and if it isn't paid June first the state will be everlastingly disgraced."

"Oh, yes; I'd forgotten about that."

"I don't see how you could forget about it. That must be almost as much money as there is in the world, Mr. Ardmore."

"We've got to raise it, anyhow, even if we go to the pawn-shop. I pawned my watch once when I was in college and Billings—he was my guardian—had shut me off. Grissy—he's my friend—Grissy says pawnbroking is only a more vulgar form of banking. There was

a fellow in my class at college who pawned his pawn ticket to get money to pay his laundress, and then gave the new ticket to a poor blind man. He's a big man in Wall Street—has a real genius for finance, they say. But please don't worry about this rascal Foster. We'll put some digitalis into the state's credit when the time comes."

"I think your telegram to the sheriff is all right," said Jerry, reading it again. "If you'll go to the door and whistle for the messenger we'll get it off. I'll sign it with the rubber stamp. Papa hardly ever signs anything himself; he says if you don't sign documents yourself you can always repudiate them afterward, and papa's given prayerful thought to all such things."

Ardmore addressed himself once more to the map. It was clear that the Appleweight gang was powerful enough to topple great states upon their foundations. It had, to Ardmore's own knowledge, driven a governor into exile, and through the wretched Foster, who was their friend, the credit of the state was gravely menaced. The possibilities of the game fascinated Ardmore. He was eager for action on the scene of this usurpation and defiance. Responsibility, for the first time, had placed

a warrant of trust in his hands, and, thus commissioned, the spurs of duty pricked his sides.

"I'll wait for the sheriff's answer, and if he shows no signs of life I'll go down there this afternoon."

"Then you will undoubtedly be shot!" Jerry declared, as though announcing a prospect not wholly deplorable.

"That has its disagreeable side, but a great many people have to be shot every year to keep up the average, and if the statistics need me I won't duck. I'll call up my man on the telephone this forenoon and tell him to put my forester at Ardsley to work. He's a big fellow who served in the German army, and if he's afraid of anything I haven't heard of it. If we can drive the gang into South Carolina, right along here, you see"—and Miss Dangerfield bent her pretty head over the map and saw—"if we can pass the chief outlaw on to Governor Osborne, then so much the better, and that's what we will try to do."

"But you're only the private secretary, and you can't assume too much authority. I shall have to go to Kildare to visit my aunt, who is a nice old lady that lives there. The fried corn mush and syrup at her house is the best I ever tasted, and if papa should come when he

sees that something is being done quite different from what he intended, then I should be there to explain. If you should be killed, Mr. Ardmore, no one would be there to identify you, and I have always thought it the saddest thing in the world for any one to die away from home—"

"It would be sad; but I hope you would be sorry."

"I should regret your death, and I'd make them give you a perfectly beautiful military funeral, with Chopin's funeral march, and your boots tied to the saddle of your horse."

"But don't let them fuss about pulling off the boots, Miss Dangerfield, if I die with them on. It would be all right for you to visit your aunt, but I shouldn't do it if I were you. I once visited my aunt, Mrs. Covington-Burns, at Newport for a week. It was a deep game to get me to marry my aunt's husband's niece, whose father had lost his money, and the girl was beginning to bore my aunt."

"Was she a pretty girl?" asked Jerry.

"She was a whole basket of peaches, and I might have married her to get away from my aunt if it were not that I have made it a life-long rule never to marry the

orphaned nieces of the husbands of my aunts. It's been a good rule to me, and has saved me no end of trouble. But if my sister doesn't change her mind, and if she really comes through Raleigh to-day in her car with those friends of hers, she will be delighted to have you join her for a visit at Ardsley. And then you would be near at hand in case some special edict from the governor seemed necessary."

"But wouldn't your sister think it strange—"

"Not in the least, Miss Dangerfield. Nothing is strange to my sister. Nobody ever sprang a surprise on Nellie yet. And besides, you are the daughter of the governor of a great state. She refuses to meet senators, because you can never be sure they are respectable, but she rather prides herself on knowing governors. Governors are very different. Since I read the constitution I can see very plainly that governors are much nearer the people, but I guess the senators are nearer the banks."

"Well, I have some shopping to do, and it's ten o'clock. It would be hospitable to ask you to luncheon, but mama cries so much because she doesn't know where papa is that our meals at the executive mansion are not

exactly cheerful functions. And besides"—and she eyed Ardmore severely as she rose and accepted her parasol from him—"and besides, you know our relations are purely official. You have never been introduced to me, and socially you are not known to us."

CHAPTER IX

THE LAND OF THE LITTLE BROWN JUG

Caboose 0186, with three box-cars and a locomotive attached, lay in the southeastern yards at Raleigh late in the evening of the same day. In the observatory sat Mr. Thomas Ardmore, chatting with the conductor, while they waited for the right of way. Mr. Ardmore's pockets were filled with papers, and he held half a dozen telegrams in his hand. The freight cars behind him were locked and sealed, and a number of men lounging near appeared to be watching them.

The reply of the sheriff of Dilwell County had precipitated the crisis. That official succinctly replied to Ardmore's message:

Be good and acquire grace.

While this dictum had aroused Miss Dangerfield's wrath and indignation, it calmed her fellow conspirator, and for hours Ardmore had poured forth orders by telegraph and telephone. No such messages as his

had ever before radiated from Raleigh. The tolls would have bankrupted the commonwealth if Ardmore had not cared for them out of his private purse. His forester, with an armed posse from Ardsley, was already following the streams and beating the brush in search of Appleweight. One car of Ardmore's special train contained a machine gun and a supply of rifles; another abundant ammunition and commissary supplies, and the third cots and bags. The men who loafed about the train were a detail of strike-breakers from a detective agency, borrowed for the occasion. Cooke, the conductor of the train, had formerly been in the government secret service, and knew the Carolina hill country as he knew the palm of his hand. Ardmore had warned his manager and the housekeeper on his estate to prepare for the arrival of Mrs. Atchison, whose private car had come and gone, carrying Miss Geraldine Dangerfield on to Ardsley. Ardmore had just received a message from his sister at some way station, reporting all well and containing these sentences: "She is rather different, and I do not quite make her out. She has our noble brother-in-law a good deal bewildered."

Cooke ran forward for a colloquy with the engineer over their orders; the guards climbed into one of the

box-cars, and the train moved slowly out of the Raleigh yards to the main line and rattled away toward Kildare, with Mr. Ardmore, pipe in mouth, perched in the caboose cupola.

A caboose, you may not know, is the pleasantest place in the world to ride. Essentially a thing of utility, it is not less the vehicle of joy. Neither the captain of a trading schooner nor the admiral of a canal fleet is more sublimely autocratic than the freight conductor in his watch-tower. The landscape is disclosed to him in leisurely panoramas; the springs beneath are not so lulling as to dull his senses. If he isn't whipped into the ditch by the humor of the engineer, or run down and telescoped by an enemy from behind, he may ultimately deliver his somber fleet to its several destinations; but he is the slave of no inexorable time-table, and his excuses are as various as his cargoes.

Not Captain Kidd nor another of the dark brotherhood sailed forth with keener zest for battle than Mr. Ardmore. Indeed, the trailing smoke of the locomotive suggested a black flag, and the thought of it tickled his fancy. Above bent the bluest sky in the world; fields of corn and cotton, the brilliant crimson of German clover, and long stretches of mixed forest held him with

enchantment. In a cornfield a girl plowing with a single steer—a little girl in a sunbonnet, who reached wearily up to the plow handles—paused and waved to him, and he knew the delight of the lonely mariner when a passing ship speaks to him with flags. And when night came, after the long mystical twilight, the train passed now and then great cotton factories that blazed out from their thousand windows like huge steamships.

When they sought a lonely siding to allow a belated passenger train to pass, the conductor brewed coffee and cooked supper, and Ardmore called in the detectives and trainmen. The sense of knowing real people, whose daily occupations were so novel and interesting, touched him afresh with delight. These men said much in few words. The taciturnity of Cooke, the conductor, in particular, struck Ardmore as very fine, and it occurred to him that very likely men who have had the fun of doing things never talk of their performances afterward. One of the detectives chaffed Cooke covertly about some adventure in which they had been jointly associated.

"I never thought they'd get the lead out of you after that business in Missouri. You were a regular mine,"

said the detective to Cooke, and Cooke glanced deprecatingly at Ardmore.

"He's the little joker, all right."

"You can't kill him," remarked the detective. "I've seen it tried."

Before the train started the detectives crawled back into their car, and Cooke drew out some blankets, tossed them on a bench for Ardmore, and threw himself down without ado. Ardmore held to his post in the tower, as lone as the lookout in a crow's-nest. The night air swept more coolly in as they neared the hills, and the train's single brakeman came down as though descending from the sky, rubbed the cinders from his eyes, and returned to his vigil armed with a handful of Ardmore's cigars.

For the greater part of the night they enjoyed a free track, and thumped the rails at a lively clip. Shortly after midnight Ardmore crawled below and went to sleep. At five o'clock Cooke called him.

"We're on the switch at Kildare. One of your men is here waiting for you."

Big Paul, the German forester, was called in, and Ardmore made his toilet in a pail of water while listening to the big fellow's report. Cooke joined in the con-

versation, and Ardmore was gratified to see that the two men met on common ground in discussing the local geography. The forester described in clear, straightforward English just what he had done. He had distributed his men well through the hills, and they were now posted as pickets on points favorable for observation. They had found along the streams four widely scattered stills, and these were being watched. Paul drew a small map, showing the homes of the most active members of the Appleweight gang, and Ardmore indicated all these points as nearly as possible on the county map he had brought with him.

"Here's Raccoon Creek, and my own land runs right through there—just about here, isn't it, Paul? I always remember the creek, because I like the name so much."

"You are right, Mr. Ardmore. The best timber you have lies along there, and your land crosses the North Carolina boundary into South Carolina about here. There's Mingo County, South Carolina, you see."

"Well, that dashes me!" exclaimed Ardmore, striking the table with his fist. "I never knew one state from another, but you must be right."

"I'm positive of it, Mr. Ardmore. One of my men has been living there on the creek to protect your tim-

ber. Some of these outlaws have been cutting off our wood."

"It seems to me I remember the place. There's a log house hanging on the creek. You took me by it once, but it never entered my head that the state line was so close."

"It runs right through the house! And some one, years ago, blazed the trees along there, so it is very easy to tell when you step from one state to another. My man left there recently, refusing to stay any longer. These Appleweight people thought he was a spy, and posted a notice on his door warning him to leave, so I shifted him to the other end of the estate."

"Did you see the sheriff at Kildare?"

"I haven't seen him. When I asked for him yesterday I found he had left town and gone to Greensboro to see his sick uncle."

Ardmore laughed and slapped his knee.

"Who takes care of the dungeon while he's away?"

"There are no prisoners in the Kildare jail. The sheriff's afraid to keep any; and he's like the rest of the people around here. They all live in terror of Appleweight."

"Appleweight is a powerful character in these parts,"

said Cooke, pouring the coffee he had been making, and handing a tin cupful to Ardmore. "He's tolerable well off, and could make money honestly if he didn't operate stills, rob country stores, mix up in politics, and steal horses when he and his friends need them."

"I guess he has never molested us any, has he, Paul?" asked Ardmore, not a little ashamed of his ignorance of his own business.

"A few of our cows stray away sometimes and never come back. And for two years we have lost the corn out of the crib away over here near the deer park."

"They've got the juice out of it before this," remarked Cooke.

"That would be nice for me, wouldn't it?" said Ardmore, grinning—"to be arrested for running a still on my place."

"We don't want to lose our right to the track, and we must get out of this before the whole community comes to take a look at us," said Cooke, swinging out of the caboose.

Ardmore talked frankly to the forester, having constant recourse to the map; and Paul sketched roughly a new chart, marking roads and paths so far as he knew them, and indicating clearly where the Ardsley boun-

daries extended. Then Ardmore took a blue pencil and drew a straight line.

"When we get Appleweight, we want to hurry him from Dilwell County, North Carolina, into Mingo County, South Carolina. We will go to the county town there, and put him in jail. If the sheriff of Mingo is weak-kneed, we will lock Appleweight up anyhow, and telegraph the governor of South Carolina that the joke is on him."

"We will catch the man," said Paul gravely, "but we may have to kill him."

"Dead or alive, he's got to be caught," said Ardmore, and the big forester stared at his employer a little oddly; for this lord proprietor had not been known to his employees and tenants as a serious character, but rather as an indolent person who, when he visited his estate in the hills, locked himself up unaccountably in his library and rarely had the energy to stir up the game in his broad preserves.

"Certainly, sir; dead or alive," Paul repeated.

Cooke came out of the station and signaled the engineer to go ahead.

"We'll pull down here about five miles to an old spur where the company used to load wood. There's a

little valley there where we can be hidden all we please, so far as the main line is concerned, and it might not be a bad idea to establish headquarters there. We have the tools for cutting in on the telegraph, and we can be as independent as we please. I told the agent we were carrying company powder for a blasting job down the line, and he suspects nothing."

Paul left the caboose as the train started, and rode away on horseback to visit his pickets. The train crept warily over the spur into the old wood-cutters' camp, where, as Cooke had forecast, they were quite shut in from the main line by hills and woodland.

"And now, Mr. Ardmore, if you would like to see fire-water spring out of the earth as freely as spring water, come with me for a little stroll. The thirsty of Dilwell County know the way to these places as city topers know the way to a bar. We are now in the land of the little brown jug, and while these boys get breakfast I'll see if the people in this region have changed their habits."

It was not yet seven as they struck off into the forest beside the cheerful little brook that came down singing from the hills. Ardmore had rarely before in his life been abroad so early, and he kicked the dew from the

grass in the cheerfullest spirit imaginable. Within a few days he had reared a pyramid of noble resolutions. Life at last entertained him. The way of men of action had been as fabulous to him as the dew that now twinkled before him. Griswold knew books, but here at his side strode a man who knew far more amazing things than were written in any book. Cooke had not been in this region for seven years, and yet he never hesitated, but walked steadily on, following the little brook. Presently he bent over the bank and gathered up a brownish substance that floated on the water, lifted a little of it in his palm and sniffed it.

"That," said Cooke, holding it to Ardmore's nose, "is corn mash. That's what they make their liquor out of. The still is probably away up yonder on that hillside. It seems to me that we smashed one there once when I was in the service; and over there, about a mile beyond that pine tree, where you see the hawk circling, three of us got into a mix-up, and one of our boys was killed."

He crossed the stream on a log, climbed the bank on the opposite shore, and scanned the near landscape for a few minutes. Then he pointed to an old stump over which vines had grown in wild profusion.

"If you will walk to that stump, Mr. Ardmore, and

feel under the vines on the right-hand side, your fingers will very likely touch something smooth and cool."

Ardmore obeyed instructions. He thrust his hand into the stump as Cooke directed, thrust again a little deeper, and laughed aloud as he drew out a little brown jug.

Cooke nodded approvingly.

"We're all right. The revenue men come in here occasionally and smash the stills and arrest a few men, but the little brown jug continues to do business at the same old stand. They don't even change the hiding-places. And while we stand here, you may be pretty sure that a freckled-faced, tow-headed boy or girl is watching us off yonder, and that the word will pass all through the hills before noon that there are strangers abroad in old Dilwell. If you have a dollar handy, slip it under the stump, so they'll know we're not stingy."

Ardmore was scrutinizing the jug critically.

"They're all alike," said Cooke, "but that piece of calico is a new one—just a fancy touch for an extra fine article of liquor."

"I'll be shot if I haven't seen that calico before," said Ardmore; and he sat down on a boulder and drew out the stopper, while Cooke watched him with interest.

The bit of twine was indubitably the same that he had unwound before in his room at the Guilford House, and the cob parted in his fingers exactly as before. On a piece of brown paper that had been part of a tobacco wrapper was scrawled:

This ain't yore fight, Mr. Ardmore. Wher's the guvner of North Carolina?

"That's a new one on me," laughed Cooke. "You see, they know everything. Mind-reading isn't in it with them. They know who we are and what we have come for. What's the point about the governor?"

"Oh, the governor's all right," replied Ardmore carelessly. "He wouldn't bother his head about a little matter like this. The powers reserved to the states by the constitution give a governor plenty of work without acting as policeman of the jungle. That's the reason I said to Governor Dangerfield, 'Governor,' I said, 'don't worry about this Appleweight business. Time is heavy on my hands,' I said. 'You stay in Raleigh and uphold the dignity of your office, and I will take care of the trouble in Dilwell.' And you can't understand, Cooke, how his face brightened at my words. Being the brave man he is, you would naturally expect him to come

down here in person and seize these scoundrels with his own hands. I had the hardest time of my life to get him to stay at home. It almost broke his heart not to come."

And as they retraced their steps to the caboose, it was Ardmore who led, stepping briskly along, and blithely swinging the jug.

CHAPTER X

PROFESSOR GRISWOLD TAKES THE FIELD

Barbara and Griswold stopped at the telegraph office on their way back to the executive mansion, and were met with news that the sheriff of Mingo had refused to receive Griswold's message.

"His private lines of communication with the capital are doubtless well established," said Griswold, "and Bosworth probably warned him, but it isn't of great importance. It's just as well for Appleweight and his friends, high and low, to show their hands."

When they were again on the veranda, Griswold lingered for a moment with no valid excuse for delay beyond the loveliness of the night and his keen delight in Barbara's voice and her occasional low laughter, which was so pleasant to hear that he held their talk to a light key, that he might evoke it the more. Professor Griswold's last flirtation was now so remote that he would have been hard put to say whether the long-departed goddess' name had been Evelyn or Laura. He

had so thoroughly surrendered himself to the exactions of the law that love and marriage held small place in his speculations of the future. He had heard himself called a bachelor professor with the humorous tolerance of one who is pretty sure of himself, and who is not yet reduced to the cynical experiment of peering beneath the top layer of his box of strawberries to find the false bottom. He recalled the slender manuscript volume of verses in his desk at home, and he felt that it would be the easiest thing in the world to write a thousand songs to-night, beside which the soundest brief ever filed in any court would be the silliest of literary twaddle.

"You have done all that could be asked of you, Mr. Griswold, and I can not permit you to remain longer. Father will certainly be here to-morrow. I assure you that it is not like him to avoid his public obligations. His absence is the most unaccountable thing that ever happened. I have my difficulties here at home, for since my mother's death I have had the care of my young sisters, and it is not pleasant to have to deceive them."

"Oh, but your father isn't absent! He is officially present and in the saddle," laughed Griswold. "You must not admit, even to me, that he is not here in full charge of his office. And as for my leaving the field, I

have not the slightest intention of going back to Virginia until the Appleweight ghost is laid, the governor of North Carolina brought to confusion, and the governor of South Carolina visibly present and thundering his edicts again, so to speak, *ex cathedra*. My own affairs can wait, Miss Osborne. My university may go hang; my clients may be mulcted in direst damages, but just now I am your humble servant, and I shall not leave your service until my tasks are finished. I am consulting not my duty, but my pleasure. The joy of having a hand in a little affair like this, and of being able to tell my friend Tommy Ardmore about it afterward, would be sufficient. Ardmore will never speak to me again for not inviting him to a share in the game."

He was more buoyant than she had seen him, and she liked the note of affection that crept into his tone as he spoke of his friend.

"Ardmore is the most remarkable person alive," Griswold continued. "You remember—I spoke of him this morning. He likes to play the inscrutable idiot, and he carries it off pretty well; but underneath he's really clever. The most amazing ideas take hold of him. You never could imagine what he's doing now! I met him accidentally in Atlanta the other day, and he was in

pursuit of a face—a girl's face that he had seen from a car window for only an instant on a siding somewhere."

"He must have a romantic temperament," suggested Barbara.

"Quite that. His family have been trying to marry him off to some one in their own set ever since I have known him, but he's extremely difficult. One of the most remarkable things about him is his amazing democracy. He owns a palace on Fifth Avenue, but rarely occupies it, for he says it bores him. He has a camp in the Adirondacks, but I have never known him to visit it. His place in North Carolina pleases him because there he commands space, and no one can crowd him or introduce him to people he doesn't want to meet. He declares that the most interesting people don't have more than a dollar a day to spend; that the most intelligent and the best-looking girls in America clerk in shops and work in factories. A philanthropic lady in New York supplies him every Christmas with a list of names of laundry girls, who seem to appeal particularly to Ardy's compassion, though he never knew one in his life, but he admires them for the zeal with which they destroy buttonholes and develop the deckle-edge cuff; and he has twenty-dollar bills mailed to them quite

mysteriously, and without any hint of who Santa Claus really is."

"But the girl he saw from the car window—did she also appeal to him altruistically?"

"No; it was with her eye. He declared to me most solemnly that the girl winked at him!"

Griswold was aware that Miss Osborne's interest in Ardmore cooled perceptibly.

"Oh!" she said, with that delightful intonation with which a woman utterly extinguishes a sister.

"I shouldn't have told you that," said Griswold, guiltily aware of falling temperature. "He is capable of following a winking eye at a perfectly respectful distance for a hundred years, and of being entertained all the time by the joy of pursuit."

"It seems very unusual," said Barbara, with cold finality.

Griswold remembered this talk as, the next day, aboard the train bound for Turner Court House, the seat of Mingo County, South Carolina, he pondered a telegram he had received from Ardmore. He read and re-read this message, chewing cigars and scowling at the landscape, and the cause of his perturbation of spirit may be roughly summarized in these words:

On leaving the executive mansion the night before, he had studied maps in his room at the Saluda House, and carefully planned his campaign. He had talked by telephone with the prosecuting attorney of Mingo County, and found that official politely responsive. So much had gone well. Then the juxtaposition of Ardmore's estate to the border, and the possible use of the house as headquarters, struck in upon him. He would, after all, generously take Ardmore into the game, and they would uphold the honor and dignity of the great commonwealth of South Carolina together. The keys of all Ardmore's houses were, so to speak, in Griswold's pocket, and invitations were unnecessary between them; yet, at Atlanta Ardmore had made a point of asking Griswold down to help while away the tedium of Mrs. Atchison's house party, and as a matter of form Griswold had wired from Columbia, advising Ardmore of his unexpected descent.

Even in case Ardmore should still be abroad in pursuit of the winking eye, the doors of the huge house would be open to Griswold, who had entered there so often as the owner's familiar friend. These things he pondered deeply as he read and re-read Ardmore's reply to his message, a reply which was plainly enough

dated at Ardsley, but which, he could not know, had really been written in caboose 0186 as it lay on a siding in the southeastern yards at Raleigh, and thence despatched to the manager at Ardsley, with instructions to forward it as a new message to Griswold at Columbia. The chilling words thus flung at him were:

Professor Henry Maine Griswold,
Saluda House, Columbia, S. C.:

I am very sorry, old man, but I can not take you in just now. Scarlet fever is epidemic among my tenants, and I could not think of exposing you to danger. As soon as the accursed plague passes I want to have you down.

ARDMORE.

An epidemic that closed the gates of Ardsley would assume the proportions of a national disaster; for even if the great house itself were quarantined, there were lodges and bungalows scattered over the domain, where a host of guests could be entertained in comfort. Griswold reflected that the very fact that he had wired from Columbia must have intimated to Ardmore that his friend was flying toward him, pursuant to the Atlanta invitation. Griswold dismissed a thousand speculations as unworthy. Ardmore had never shown the remotest trace of snobbishness, and as far as the threatened house

party was concerned, Griswold knew Mrs. Atchison very well, and had been entertained at her New York house.

The patronizing tone of the thing caused Griswold to flush at every reading. If the Ardsley date-line had not been so plainly written; if the phraseology were not so characteristic, there might be room for doubt; but Ardmore—Ardmore, of all men, had slapped him in the face!

But, scarlet fever or no scarlet fever, the pursuit of Appleweight had precedence of private grievances. By the time he reached Turner Court House Griswold had dismissed the ungraciousness of Ardmore, and his jaws were set with a determination to perform the mission intrusted to him by Barbara Osborne, and to wait until later for an accounting with his unaccountable friend.

Arrived at Turner's, Griswold strode at once toward the court house. The contemptuous rejection of his message by the sheriff of Mingo had angered Griswold, but he was destined to feel even more poignant insolence when, entering the sheriff's office, a deputy, languidly posed as a letter "V" in a swivel-chair, with his feet on the mantel, took a cob pipe from his mouth and lazily answered Griswold's importunate query with:

"The sheriff ain't hyeh, seh. He's a-visitin' his folks in Tennessy."

"When will he be back?" demanded Griswold, hot of heart, but maintaining the icy tone that had made him so formidable in cross-examination.

"I reckon I don't know, seh."

"Do you know your own name?" persisted Griswold sweetly.

"Go to hell, seh," replied the deputy. He reached for a match, relighted his pipe, and carefully crossed his feet on the mantel-shelf. The moment Griswold's steps died away in the outer corridor the deputy rose and busied himself so industriously with the telephone that within an hour all through the Mingo hills, and even beyond the state line, along lonely trails, across hills and through valleys, and beside cheery creeks and brooks, it was known that a strange man from Columbia was in Mingo County looking for the sheriff, and Appleweight, *alias* Poteet, and his men were everywhere on guard.

Griswold liked the prosecuting attorney on sight. His name was Habersham, and he was a youngster with a clear and steady gray eye. Instead of the Southern statesman's flowing prince albert, he wore a sack-coat of

gray jeans, and was otherwise distinguished by a shirt of white and blue check. He grinned as Griswold bent a puzzled look upon him.

"I took your courses at the university two years ago, Professor, and I remember distinctly that you always wore a red cravat to your Wednesday lectures."

"You have done well," replied Griswold, "for I never expected to find an old student who remembered half as much of me as that. Now, as I understood you over the telephone, Appleweight was indicted for stealing a ham in this county by the last grand jury, but the sheriff has failed or refused to make the arrest. How did the grand jury come to indict if this outlaw dominates all the hill country?"

"The grand jury wanted to make a showing of virtue, and it was, of course, understood between the foreman, the leader of the gang, and the sheriff that no warrant could be served on Appleweight. I did my duty; the grand jury's act was exemplary; and there the wheels of justice are blocked. The same thing is practically true across the state line in Dilwell County, North Carolina. These men, led by Appleweight, use their intimate knowledge of the country to elude pursuers when at times the revenue men undertake a raid, and the county

authorities have never seriously molested them. Now and then one of these sheriffs will make a feint of going out to look for Appleweight, but you may be sure that due notice is given before he starts. Three revenue officers have lately been killed while looking for these men, and the government is likely to take vigorous action before long."

"We may as well be frank," said Griswold in his most professional voice. "I don't want the federal authorities to take these men; it is important that they should not do so. This is an affair between the governors of the two Carolinas. It has been said that neither of them dares press the matter of arrest, but I am here in Governor Osborne's behalf to give the lie to that imputation."

"That has undoubtedly been the fact, as you know," and Habersham smiled at his old preceptor inquiringly. "Osborne once represented the Appleweights, and he undoubtedly saved the leader from the gallows. That was before Osborne ever thought of becoming governor, and he acted only within his proper rights as a lawyer. I don't recall that anything in professional ethics requires us to abandon a client because we know he's guilty. If such were the case we'd all starve to death."

"Governor Osborne has been viciously maligned," declared Griswold. "While he did at one time represent these people—no doubt thoroughly and efficiently—he holds the loftiest ideal of public service, and it was only when his official integrity was brought into question by unscrupulous enemies that he employed me as special counsel to carry this affair through to a conclusion. That accounts for my presence here, Habersham, and, with your assistance, I propose to force Governor Dangerfield's hand. Suppose all these people were arrested in Mingo County under these indictments, what would be the result—trial and acquittal?"

"Just that, in spite of any effort made to convict them."

"Well, Governor Osborne is tired of this business and wants the Appleweight scandal disposed of once and for all."

"That's strange," remarked Habersham, clearly surprised at Griswold's vigorous tone. "I called on the governor in his office at Columbia only ten days ago, and he put me off. He said he had to prepare an address to deliver before the South Carolina Political Reform Association, and he couldn't take up the Appleweight case; and I called on Bosworth, the attorney-general, and he

grew furiously angry, and said I was guilty of the gravest malfeasance in not having brought those men to book long ago. When I suggested that he connive with the governor toward removing our sheriff, he declared that the governor was a coward. He seemed anxious to put the governor in a hole, though why he should take that attitude I can't make out, as it has been generally understood that Governor Osborne's personal friendliness for him secured his nomination and election to the attorney-generalship, and I have heard that he is engaged to the governor's oldest daughter."

"He is a contemptible hound," replied Griswold with feeling, "and at the proper time we shall deal with him; but it is of more importance just now to make Appleweight a prisoner in North Carolina. If he's arrested over there, that lets us out; and if the North Carolina authorities won't arrest their own criminals we'll go over into Dilwell County and show them how to be good. The man's got to be locked up, and he'd look much better in a North Carolina jail, under all the circumstances."

"That's good in theory, but how do you justify it in law?"

"Oh, that's the merest matter of formulæ! My dear

Habersham, all the usual processes of law go down before emergencies!"

The airiness of Griswold's tone caused the prosecutor to laugh, for this was not the sober associate professor of admiralty whose lectures he had sat under at the University of Virginia, but a different person, whose new attitude toward the law and its enforcement shocked him immeasurably.

"You seem to be going in for pretty loose interpretations, and if that plaster bust of John Marshall up there falls from the shelf, you need not be surprised," and Habersham still laughed. "I might be impudent and cite you against yourself!"

"That would constitute contempt of court, and I can not just now spare your services long enough for you to serve a jail sentence. Go on now, and tell me what you have done and what you propose."

"Well, as I told you over the telephone, we hear a great deal about Appleweight and his crowd, but we never hear much of their enemies, who are, nevertheless, of the same general stock, and equally determined when aroused. Ten of these men I have quietly called to meet at my farm out here a few miles from town, on Thursday night. They come from different points over the country,

and we'll have a small but grim posse that will be ready for business. You may not know it, but the Appleweights are most religious. Appleweight himself boasts that he never misses church on Sunday. He goes also to the mid-week service on Thursday night, so I have learned, and thereby hangs our opportunity. Mount Nebo Church lies off here toward the north. It's a lonely point in itself, though it's the spiritual center and rendezvous for a wide area. If Appleweight can be taken at all, that's the place, and I'm willing to make the trial. Whether to stampede the church and make a fight, or seize him alone as he approaches the place, is a question for discussion with the boys I have engaged to go into the game. How does it strike you?"

"First rate. Ten good men ought to be enough; but if it comes down to numbers, the state militia can be brought into use. The South Carolina National Guard is in camp, and we can have a regiment quick enough, if I ask it."

Habersham whistled.

"Osborne is certainly up and doing!" he exclaimed, chuckling. "I suppose he has tossed a quarter, and decided it's better to be good than to be senator. By the way, that was a curious story in the newspapers about

Dangerfield and Osborne having a row at New Orleans. I wonder just what passed between them?"

Griswold was conscious that Habersham glanced at him a little curiously, with a look that implied something that half formed itself on the prosecuting attorney's lips.

"I know nothing beyond what I read in the newspapers at the time. Some political row, I fancy."

"I suppose Governor Osborne hasn't discussed it with you since his return to Columbia?" asked Habersham carelessly. The shadow of a smile flitted across his face but vanished quickly as though before a returning consciousness of the fact that he was facing Henry Maine Griswold, who was first of all a gentleman, and not less a scholar and a man of the world, who was not to be trifled with.

"No," replied Griswold, a little shortly. "I was appealed to in rather an unusual way in this matter of Appleweight. It is quite out of my line as a legal proposition, but there are other considerations of which I may not speak."

"Pardon me," murmured Habersham; but he asked: "What was Governor Osborne doing when you left Columbia?"

"When I left Columbia," remarked Griswold, and it was he that smiled now, "to the best of my knowledge and belief the governor of South Carolina was deeply absorbed in knitting a necktie, the color of which was, I think, the orange of a Blue Ridge autumn sunset. And now, if you will kindly give me pen and paper, I will communicate the Appleweight situation and our prospects to my honored chief."

CHAPTER XI

TWO LADIES ON A BALCONY

The outer aspect of Ardsley is, frankly, feudal. The idea of a North Carolina estate had grown out of Ardmore's love of privacy and his wish to get away from New York where his family was all too frequently struck by the spot light. The great tract of land once secured he had not concerned himself about a house, but had thrown together a comfortable bungalow which satisfied him for a year. But Ardmore's gentle heart, inaccessible to demands of many sorts, was a defenseless citadel when appeals were made to his generosity. A poor young architect, lately home from the Ecole des Beaux Arts, with many honors but few friends, fell under Ardmore's eyes. The towers and battlements that soon thereafter crowned the terraced slopes at Ardsley, etching a noble line against the lovely panorama of North Carolina hills, testified at once to the architect's talent for adaptation and Ardmore's diminished balances at the Bronx Loan and Trust Company.

On a balcony that commanded the sunset—a balcony bright with geraniums that hung daringly over a ravine on the west, Mrs. Atchison and Miss Jerry Dangerfield were cosily taking their tea. Their white gowns, the snowy awning stirring slightly in the hill air, the bright trifles of the tea-table mingled in a picture of charm and contentment.

"I wonder," said Mrs. Atchison abruptly, "where Tommy is."

"I have no definite idea," said Jerry, pouring cream, "but let us hope that he is earning his salary."

"His salary?" and Mrs. Atchison's brows contracted. "Do you mean that my brother is taking pay for this mysterious work he is doing?"

"He shall be paid in money," replied Jerry with decision. "As I have only the barest acquaintance with Mr. Ardmore, never, in fact, having seen him until a few days ago, it would be very improper for me to permit him to serve me except under the rules that govern the relations of employer and employee."

Mrs. Atchison smiled with the wise tolerance of a woman of the world; and she was a lady, it must be said, who had a keen perception of that sane and ample philosophy of life which proceeds, we may say, for the

sake of convenience, from the sense of humor. She did not like to be puzzled; and she had never in her life been surprised, least of all by any word or deed of her singular brother Tommy. She liked and even cultivated with daring the inadvertent turns in a day's affairs. The cool fashion in which her brother had placed the daughter of the governor of North Carolina in her hands on board her car at Raleigh had amused her. She had learned nothing from Jerry of the beginnings of that young woman's acquaintance with the master of Ardsley —an acquaintance which seemed to be intimate in certain aspects but amazingly distant and opaque in others. Miss Geraldine Dangerfield, like Mrs. Atchison herself, was difficult to surprise, and Tommy Ardmore's sister admired this in any one and she particularly admired it in Jerry, who was so charming in so many other ways. Mrs. Atchison imagined that Jerry's social experience had been meager, and yet the girl accepted the conditions of life at Ardsley as a matter of course, and in the gatherings of the house party Jerry—there was no denying it—held the center of the stage.

The men, including the Duke of Ballywinkle, hung upon her lightest word, which often left them staggering; and she frequently flung the ball of conversation

into the blue ether with a careless ease that kept expectancy a-tiptoe in the minds and hearts of all the company.

"I hope," said Mrs. Atchison, putting down her cup and gazing dreamily into the west, "that you have not given Tommy any commission in which he is likely to fail. If it were a matter of finding a fan you had left behind somewhere, or even of producing an extinct flower from the Andes, he would undoubtedly be faithful to the trust imposed on him; but in anything that is really serious, really of importance one should never depend on Tommy."

This was, as the lady knew, almost vulgarly leading; but Jerry folded her arms, and spoke out with charming frankness.

"I have heard my father say," said Jerry, "that incapable men often rise to great opportunities when they are pushed. Mr. Ardmore has undertaken to perform for me a service of the greatest delicacy and not unattended with danger. You have been kind to me, Mrs. Atchison, and as you are my chaperon and entitled to my fullest confidence it is right for you to know just how I came here, and why your brother is absent in my service."

For once curiosity bound Mrs. Atchison in chains of steel.

"Tell me nothing, dear, unless you are quite free to do so," she murmured; but her heart skipped a beat as she waited.

"I should not think of doing so except of my own free will," declared Jerry, carelessly following the flight of a hawk that flapped close by toward the neighboring woods. "It may interest you to know that just now your brother, Mr. Thomas Ardmore, is the governor of North Carolina. He does not exactly know it, for at Raleigh I myself was governor of North Carolina at the time we met and I only made Mr. Ardmore my private secretary; but when it became necessary to take the field I placed him in full charge, and he is now not only governor of the Old North State, but also the commander-in-chief of her troops in the field."

With a nice feeling for climax Jerry paused, picked a lump of sugar from the silver bowl on the tea-table, bit the edge of it daintily, and tossed it to the robins that hopped on the lawn beneath.

Mrs. Atchison moved forward slightly, but evinced no other sign of surprise. The hour, the scene, the girl were all to her liking. She would even prolong the

delight of hearing the further history of her brother's amazing elevation to supreme power in an American commonwealth—it was so foreign to all experience, so heavy with possibilities, so delicious in that it had happened to Tommy of all men in the world!

"I trust," she said, smiling a little, "that Tommy will not prove unworthy of the confidence you have reposed in him."

"If he does," said Jerry, slapping her hands together to free them of an imaginary sugar crumb, "I shall never, never marry him."

"Then may I ask, Miss Dangerfield, if you and he are engaged?"

"Not at all, Mrs. Atchison! Not only are we not engaged, but he has never even proposed to me. Besides, I am engaged to Colonel Rutherford Gillingwater, our adjutant-general."

"Then if you are engaged to this military person, just wherein lies the significance of your threat never to marry my brother."

"That," said Jerry, "is perfectly easy of explanation. Your brother and I have met only a few times, and I never become engaged to any man whom I have not known for a week at least. Marriage is a serious matter

and while the frequent breaking of engagements is painful in the extreme, I think one can not be too careful in assuming the marriage bond."

Mrs. Atchison wondered whether the girl was amusing herself at her expense, but Jerry's tone was grave and Jerry's eyes were steady. Jerry was a new species, and she had appeared at a fortunate moment when Mrs. Atchison had almost concluded that the world is a squeezed lemon.

"In view of the fact that you are engaged to Dillingwater—" began Mrs. Atchison, anxious for further disclosures touching Jerry's ideas on matrimony.

"Colonel Rutherford Gillingwater, please!" corrected Jerry.

"—I don't quite grasp this matter of your attitude toward my brother. Unless I misunderstood you, you remarked a moment ago that unless he succeeded in his present undertaking you would never marry him."

"That is exactly what I said, and I meant ever word of it," declared Jerry. "I will not conceal from you, Mrs. Atchison, my determination that your brother shall be my second husband."

There was no question of Mrs. Atchison's complete surprise now.

"Your *second* husband, child?"

"My second husband, Mrs. Atchison. Life is short at best, and I was told by my old mammy when I was a little child—she turned out afterward to be a real voodoo woman—that I should be married twice. I am very superstitious and that made a great impression on my mind. It is not in keeping with my ideas of life, Mrs. Atchison, to be long a widow, so that I think it perfectly right to choose a second husband even before I am quite sure that I have chosen wisely for my first."

"Has the military person weak lungs?"

"No; but his mind is not strong. Anything sudden like apoplexy would be sure to go hard with him."

"Then you should be careful not to shock him. It would be almost criminal to break your engagement with him."

"That rests entirely with him, Mrs. Atchison. The man I love must be brave, tender and true. After our present difficulties are over I shall know whether Rutherford Gillingwater is the man I believe I am going to marry in October."

"But you spoke a moment ago of Tommy's official position. Is this arrangement a matter of general knowledge in North Carolina?"

"No; it is not. You and he and I are the only persons who know it. Papa does not know it yet; and when papa finds it out it may go hard with him. You see, Mrs. Atchison"—and Jerry leaned forward and rested an elbow on the tea-table and tucked her little chin into the palm of her hand—"you see, papa is very absent-minded, as great men often are, and he went away and forgot to perform some duties which the honor and dignity of the state require to be performed immediately. There are some wicked men who have caused both North Carolina and South Carolina a great deal of trouble, but they must not be punished in this state, but in South Carolina, which is just over there somewhere. There are many reasons for that which would be very tiresome to tell you about, but the principal one is that Barbara Osborne, the daughter of the governor of South Carolina, is the snippiest and stuckupest person I have ever known, and while your brother and I are in charge of this state I have every intention of annoying her in every way I can. When Mr. Ardmore has caught those wicked men I spoke of, who really do not belong in this state at all, they will be marched straight into South Carolina and then we shall see what Governor Osborne does about it; and we will

show Barbara Osborne, whose father never had to paper *his* dining-room, after the war between the states, with bonds of the Confederacy—we will show her that there's a good deal of difference between the Dangerfields and the Osbornes, and between the proud Old North State and the state of South Carolina."

"And you have placed this business, requiring courage and finesse, in Tommy's hands?"

"That is exactly what I have done, Mrs. Atchison. Your brother is no great distance from here, and we have exchanged telegrams to-day; but when I told you a moment ago that I did not know his whereabouts exactly I spoke the truth. Your brother's appearance on the scene at the beginning was most providential. The stage was set, the curtain waited"—Jerry extended her arms to indicate a breadth of situation—"but there was no valiant hero. I needed a leading man, and Mr. Ardmore walked in like a fairy prince ready to take the part. And what I shall say to you further, as my chaperon, will not, I hope, cause you to think ill of me."

"I love you more and more! You may tell me anything you like without fear of being misunderstood; but tell me nothing that you prefer to keep to yourself."

"If you were not Mr. Ardmore's sister I should not

tell you this; and I shall never tell another soul. I was coming home from a visit in Baltimore and the train stopped somewhere to let another train pass. The two trains stood side by side for a little while and in the window of the sleeper opposite me I saw a young man who seemed very sad. I thought perhaps he had buried all his friends, for he had the appearance of one lately bereaved. It has always seemed to me that we should do what we can to cheer the afflicted, and this gentleman was staring out of his window very sadly, as though he needed a friend, and as he caught my eye it seemed to me that there was an appeal in it that it would have been unwomanly for me to ignore. So, just as my train started, at the very last moment that we looked at each other, I winked at that gentleman with, I think, my right eye."

Miss Geraldine Dangerfield touched the offending member delicately with her handkerchief.

Mrs. Atchison bent forward and took both the girl's hands.

"And that was Tommy—my brother Tommy?"

"That gentleman has proved to be Mr. Thomas Ardmore. I had not the slightest idea that I should ever in the world see him again. My only hope was that he

would go on his way cheered and refreshed by my sign of good-will, though he was either so depressed or so surprised, that he made no response. I never expected to see him again in this world; and when I had almost forgotten all about him he coolly sent in his card to me at the executive mansion in Raleigh. And I was very harsh with him when I learned who he was; for you know the Ardmore estate owns a lot of North Carolina bonds that are due on the first of June, and Mr. Billings had been chasing papa all over the country to know whether they will be paid; and I supposed that of course your brother was looking for papa, too, to annoy him about some mere detail of that bond business, for the state treasurer, who does not love papa, has gone away fishing and Mr. Billings is perfectly wild."

"Delicious!" exclaimed Mrs. Atchison. "Perfectly delicious! And I am sure that when Tommy explained his real sentiments toward Mr. Billings you and he became friends at once."

"Not at once, for I came very near having him thrown out of the house; and I laughed at him about a jug that was given to him on the train at Kildare with a message in it for papa. You know when you are governor people always give you presents—that is, your friendly con-

stituents do. The others give you only unkind words. The temperance people send you jugs of buttermilk on board your train as you pass through the commonwealth and others send you applejack. Your brother gave back the buttermilk and kept the jug of applejack which had a warning to father in its corn-cob stopper. I thought it was very funny, and I laughed at your brother so that he was scared and ran out of the house. Then afterwards I looked out of the window of papa's office and saw Mr. Ardmore sitting on a bench in the state house yard looking ever so sad and dejected, and I sent the private secretary out to get him; and now we are, I think, the best of friends, and Mr. Ardmore is, as I have already told you, the governor of North Carolina to all intents and purposes."

"May I call you Jerry? Thank you, dear. Let me tell you that I am thirty-two and you are—?"

"Seventeen," supplied Jerry.

"And this is the most amusing, interesting and exciting thing I have heard in all my life. It might be difficult ordinarily for me to forgive the wink, but your explanation lifts it out of the realm of social impropriety into the sphere of generous benevolence. And if, after Colonel Gillingwater has gone to his reward, you

should marry my brother, I shall do all in my power to make your life in our family happy in every way."

"Your brother does not seem particularly proud of his family connection," said Jerry. "He spoke of you in the most beautiful way, but he seems distressed by the actions of some of the others."

Mrs. Atchison sighed.

"Tommy is right about us. We are a sad lot."

"But he is very hard on the duke. Since I came to Ardsley his Grace has treated me with the greatest courtesy, and he has spoken to me in the most complimentary terms. He is beyond question a man of kind heart, for he has promised me his mother's pearl necklace, which had been in her family for four hundred years."

"I should not hesitate to take the necklace, Jerry, if he really produces it, for my sister, his wife, has never had the slightest glimpse of it, and it is, I believe, in the hands of certain English trustees for the benefit of the duke's creditors. I dislike to spoil one of his Grace's pretty illusions, but unless Mr. Billings softens his heart a great deal toward the duke I fear that you will not get the pearls this summer."

"I must tell you as my chaperon, Mrs. Atchison, that

the duke has already offered to elope with me. He told me last night as we were having our coffee on the terrace, that he would gladly give up his wife, meaning, I suppose, your sister, and the Ardmore millions for me; but while I think him fascinating I want you to feel quite safe, for I promise you I shall elope with no one while I am your guest."

Mrs. Atchison's face had grown a little white and she compressed her lips in lines that were the least bit grim.

"The scoundrel!" she exclaimed half under her breath. "To think that he would insult a child like you! He is hanging about us here in the hope of getting more money, while my poor sister, his wife, is in an English sanatorium half crazed by his brutality. If Tommy knew this he would undoubtedly kill him!"

"That would be very unnecessary. A duke, after all, is something, and I should hate to have the poor man killed on my account. And besides, Mrs. Atchison, I am perfectly able to take care of myself."

"I believe you are, Jerry. But it's a terrible thing to have that beast about, and I shall tell him to-night that he must leave this place and the country."

"But first," said Jerry, "I have an engagement to ride

with him after dinner to see the moon, and the opportunity of seeing a moon with a duke of ancient family, here on the sacred soil of North Carolina, is something that I can not lightly put aside."

"You can not—you must not go!"

"Leave it to me," said Jerry, smiling slightly; "and I promise you that the duke will never again insult an American girl. And now I think I must dress for dinner."

She rose and turned her eyes dreamily to the tower above, where the North Carolina state flag flapped idly in the breeze. This silken emblem with its single star Miss Geraldine Dangerfield carried with her in her trunk wherever she traveled; and having noted Ardsley's unadorned flagstaff, she had, with her own hands, unfurled it, highly resolved that it should remain until the rightful governor returned to his own.

A few minutes later, as Mrs. Atchison was reading the late mail in her sitting-room, she took up a New York newspaper of the day before and ran over the head-lines. "Lost: A Governor" was a caption that held her eye, and she read a special despatch dated Raleigh with deepest interest. Governor Dangerfield, the item hinted, had not yet returned from New Orleans where he had gone

to attend the Cotton Planters' Convention, and where, moreover, he had quarreled with the governor of South Carolina. The cowardly conduct of both governors in dealing with the Appleweight band of outlaws was recited at length; and it was also intimated that Governor Dangerfield was deliberately absenting himself from his office to avoid meeting squarely the Appleweight issue.

Mrs. Atchison smiled to herself; then she laughed merrily as she rang for her maid.

"Little Jerry's story seemed highly plausible as she told it; and yet she is perfectly capable of spinning romance with that pretty mouth of hers, particularly when backed by those sweet and serious blue eyes. Tommy and Jerry! The combination is irresistible! If she has really turned the state of North Carolina over to my little brother something unusual will certainly happen before long."

And Mrs. Atchison was quite right in her surmise, as we shall see.

CHAPTER XII

THE EMBARRASSMENTS OF THE DUKE OF BALLYWINKLE

Mr. Frank Collins, of the Atlanta *Palladium,* trod the ties beyond Kildare with a light heart, gaily swinging a suit-case. He had walked far, but a narrow-brim straw hat, perched on the back of his head, and the cheery lilt of the waltz he whistled spoke for a jaunty spirit. As his eye ranged the landscape he marked a faint cloud of smoke rising beyond a lonely strip of wood; and coming to a dilapidated piece of track that led vaguely away into the heart of the forest, he again noted the tiny smoke-cloud. On such a day the half-gods go and the gods arrive; and the world that afternoon knew no cheerfuller spirit than the *Palladium's* agile young commissioner. Mr. Collins was not only in capital health and spirits but he rejoiced in that delicious titillation of expectancy which is the chief compensation of the journalist's life. His mission was

secret, and this in itself gave flavor to his errand; and, moreover, it promised adventures of a kind that were greatly to his liking.

As the woodland closed in about him and the curving spur carried him farther from the main right of way he ceased whistling and his steps became more guarded. Suddenly a man rose from the bushes and leveled a long arm at him detainingly.

"Stop, young man, stop where you are!"

"Hello!" called Collins, pausing. "Well, I'm jiggered if it ain't old Cookie. I say, old man, is the untaxed juice flowing in the forest primeval or what brings you here?"

Cooke grinned as he recalled the reporter, whom he remembered as a particularly irrepressible specimen of his genus whom he had met while pursuing moonshiners in Georgia. The two shook hands amiably midway of the two streaks of rust.

"Young man, I think I told you once before that your legs were altogether too active. I want you to light right out of here—skip!"

"Not for a million dollars. Our meeting is highly opportune, Cookie. It's not for me to fly in the face of Providence. I'm going to see what's doing down here."

"All right," replied Cooke. "Take it all in and enjoy yourself; but you're my prisoner."

"Oh, that will be all right! So long as I'm with you I can't lose out."

"March!" called Cooke, dropping behind; and thus the two came in a few minutes to the engine, the cars and the caboose. From the locomotive a slight smoke still trailed hazily upward.

Thomas Ardmore, coatless and hatless, sat on the caboose steps writing messages on a broad pad, while a telegraph instrument clicked busily within. One of his men had qualified as operator and a pile of messages at his elbow testified to Ardmore's industry. Ardmore clutched in his left hand a message recently caught from the wire which he re-read from time to time with increasing satisfaction. It had been sent from Ardsley and ran:

I shall ride to-night on the road that leads south beyond the red bungalow, and on the bridle-path that climbs the ridge on the west, called Sunset Trail. A certain English gentleman will accompany me. It will be perfectly agreeable to me to come back alone. G. D.

Ardmore was still writing when Cooke stood beneath him under the caboose platform.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Ardmore, but this is our first prisoner."

Ardmore signed a despatch and then looked up and took the pipe from his mouth. Collins lifted his hat politely.

"Ah, Mr. Ardmore, you see I have taken advantage of your exceedingly kind invitation to look you up in North Carolina."

"He was looking for you very hard when I found him, Mr. Ardmore," interposed Cooke.

"Your appearance delights me," said Ardmore, extending his hand to the reporter. "It was nice of you to walk out here to find me. Wouldn't they put you up at the house?"

"Well, the fact is I didn't stop there. My paper sent me in this general direction on business, but I had every honorable intention of making you that visit after I finished my assignment. But Cookie here says I'm arrested."

"He's a dangerous character and can't be allowed to run loose in these parts. I'm going to tie him up," said Cooke.

"May I ask you, Mr. Collins, just what you are doing here?" inquired Ardmore.

"You may, and I'll bet a boiled goose that Cooke and I are on the same job."

"What are you looking for?" demanded Ardmore's chief of staff.

"It's a big story if I get it, and I have every intention of getting it," said Collins guardedly.

"Out with it!" commanded Ardmore.

"The fact is, then, that I'm looking for a person of importance."

"Go right on, please."

"And that person is the governor of North Carolina, who is mysteriously absent from Raleigh. He attended the Cotton Planters' Convention in New Orleans. He got as far as Atlanta on his way home and then disappeared. I need not say to gentlemen of your intelligence that a lost governor is ripe fruit in my business, and I have reason to believe that for some purpose of his own the governor of North Carolina is hiding in this very neighborhood."

Cooke glanced at Ardmore for instructions, but the master of Ardsley preferred to keep the matter in his own hands.

"So you want to find the governor of North Carolina, do you? Well you shall not be disappointed. You are

too able and zealous to be wasted on journalism. I have a feeling that you are destined to higher things. Something told me when we met in Atlanta that fate had set us apart for each other. That was why I asked you to visit me when I really didn't know but that, after learning where the spoons are kept, you would skip without leaving your subsequent address. But now there is important business on hand and the state of North Carolina will take the liberty of borrowing you from Georgia until the peace of the Old North State is restored. And now, Collins, I will make a disclosure that will undoubtedly startle you a good deal, but you are no longer employed by the Atlanta *Palladium*, and your obligations to that journal must be transferred to the state in which you now stand. You came here, Collins, to look for the governor of North Carolina, and your wits and your argus-nose for news have served you well. You have found the governor of North Carolina: I am he!"

Collins had stood during this recital in the middle of the track, with his legs wide apart, calmly fanning himself with his hat; but as Ardmore proceeded the reporter's hand dropped to his side, and a grin that had overspread his face slowly yielded to a blank stare.

"Would you mind repeating those last words?"

"*I* am the governor of North Carolina, Mr. Collins. The manner in which I attained that high office is not important. It must suffice that I am in sole charge of the affairs of this great state, without relief from valuation or appraisement laws and without benefit of clergy. And we have much to do here; mere social conversation must await an ampler time. I now appoint you publicity agent to the governor. Your business is to keep the people fooled—all the people all the time. In other words, you are chief liar to the administration, a position of vast responsibility, for which you have, if I am a judge of character, the greatest talents. You will begin by sending out word that Governor Dangerfield has given up all other work at present but the destruction of the Appleweight gang. These stories that the governor has hidden himself to dodge certain duties are all punk—do you understand?—he is serving the people as he has always served them, faithfully and with the noblest self-sacrifice. That's the sort of stuff I want you to jam into the newspapers all over the world. And remember—my name does not appear in the business at all—neither now nor hereafter."

"But by the ghost of John C. Calhoun, don't you see

that I'm losing the chance of my life in my own profession? There's a story in this that would put me to the top and carry me right into New York," and Collins glanced about for his suit-case, as though meditating flight.

"Your appointment has gone into effect," said Ardmore with finality, "and if you bolt you will be caught and made to walk the plank. And so far as your future is concerned, you shall have a newspaper of your own anywhere you please as soon as this war is over."

The three men adjourned to the caboose where Ardmore told Collins all that it seemed necessary for the newspaper man to know; and within half an hour the new recruit had entered thoroughly into the spirit of the adventure, though his mirth occasionally got the better of him, and he bowed his head in his hands and surrendered himself to laughter. Thereafter, until the six o'clock supper was ready, he kept the operator occupied. He sent to the *Palladium* a thoroughly plausible story giving prominence to the Appleweight case and laying stress on Governor Dangerfield's vigorous personality and high sense of official responsibility. He sent queries to leading journals everywhere, offering exclusive news of the rumored disappearance of North

Carolina's governor. His campaign of publicity for the state administration was broadly planned, though he was losing a great opportunity to beat the world with a stunning story of the amazing nerve with which Ardmore, the young millionaire, had assumed the duties of governor of North Carolina in the unaccountable absence of Governor Dangerfield from his capital. The whole thing was almost too good to be true, and Collins put away the idea of flight only upon realizing the joyous possibilities of sharing, no matter how humbly, in the fate of an administration which was fashioning the drollest of card houses. He did not know, and was not to know until long afterward, just how the young master of Ardsley had leaped into the breach; but Ardmore was an extraordinary person, whose whims set him quite apart from other men, and while, even if he escaped being shot, the present enterprise would undoubtedly lead to a long term in jail, Collins had committed himself to Ardmore's cause and would be faithful to it, no matter what happened.

Ardmore took Collins more fully into his confidence during the lingering twilight, and the reporter made many suggestions that were of real value. Meanwhile Cooke's men brought three horses from the depths of the

forest, and saddled them. Cooke entered the caboose for a final conference with Ardmore and a last look at the maps.

"Too bad," remarked the acting governor, "that we must wait until to-morrow night to pick up the Appleweights, but our present business is more important. It's time to move, Cooke."

They rode off in single file on the faintest of trails through the woods, Cooke leading and Ardmore and Collins following immediately behind him. The great host of summer stars thronged the sky, and the moon sent its soft effulgence across the night. They presently forded a noisy stream, and while they were seeking the trail again on the farther side an owl hooted a thousand yards up the creek, and while the line re-formed Cooke paused and listened. Then the owl's call was repeated farther off and so faintly that Cooke alone heard it. He laid his hand on Ardmore's rein:

"There's a foot-trail that leads along that creek, and it's very rough and difficult to follow. Half a mile from here there used to be a still, run by one of the Appleweights. We smashed it once, but no doubt they are operating again by this time. That hoot of the owl is a warning common among the pickets put out by these

people. Wireless telegraphy isn't in it with them. Every Appleweight within twenty miles will know in half an hour how many there are of us and just what direction we are taking. We must not come back here to-night. We must put up on your place somewhere and let them think, if they will, we are guests of yours out for an evening ride."

"That's all right. Unless we complete this job in about two days my administration is a fizzle," said Ardmore, as they resumed their march through the forest. There was a wilder fling to the roll of the land now, but the underbrush was better cleared, and the trail had become a bridle-path that had known man's care.

"This is some of Paul's work," said Ardmore; "and if I am not very much mistaken we are on my land now and headed straight enough for the wagon-road that leads south beyond the red bungalow. These roads in here were planned to give variety, but I never before appreciated how complicated they are."

The path stretched away through the heavy forest, and they climbed to a ridge that commanded a wide region that lay bathed in silver moonlight, so softly luminous that it seemed of the stuff of shadows made light. Westward, a mile distant, lay Ardsley, only a

little below the level of the ridge and touched with a faint purple as of spring twilight.

Ardmore sat his saddle, quietly contemplating the great house that struck him almost for the first time as imposing. He felt, too, a little heartache that he did not quite understand. He was not sure whether it was the effect of the moon, or whether he was tired, or what it was, though he thought perhaps the moon had something to do with it. His own house, of which he was sincerely fond, seemed mistily hung between heaven and earth in the moonlight, a thing not wholly of this world; and in his depression of spirit he reflected for a moment on his own aimless, friendless life; he knew then that he was lonely and that there was a great void in his mind and heart and soul and he knew also that Jerry Dangerfield and not the moon was the cause of his melancholy.

"We'd better be moving," suggested Cooke.

"It's too bad to leave that picture," remarked Collins, sighing. "Had I the lyre of Gray I should compose an *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Ardsley Castle,* which would ultimately reach the school readers and bring me fame more enduring than brass."

"Did you say brass?" ironically scoffed Cooke.

Whereupon the *Palladium's* late representative laughed softly and muttered to himself,

"Proud pile, by mighty Ardmore's hand upreared!"

"Cut it out," commanded Cooke, "or I'll drop you into the ravine. Look below there!"

Looking off from the ridge they saw a man and a woman riding along a strip of road from which the timber had been cut. The night was so still, the gray light so subdued, that the two figures moved as steadily and softly as shadow pictures on a screen.

The slow even movement of the riders was interrupted suddenly. The man, who was nearer the remote observers, had stopped and bent toward the woman as though to snatch her rein, when her horse threw up its head and fell back on its haunches. Then the woman struck the man a blow with her riding-crop, and galloped swiftly away along the white ribbon-like road. In the perfect night-silence it was like a scene of pantomime.

"That's all right!" cried Cooke. "Come along! We'll cut into that road at the bungalow."

They swung their horses away from the ridge and back into the bridle-path, which once more dipped sharply down into heavy timber, Cooke leading the way,

and three of the best hunters known to the Ardsley stables flew down the clear but winding path. The incident which the trio had witnessed required no interpretation: the girl's blow and flight had translated it into language explicit enough.

Ardmore thanked his German forester a thousand times for the admirable bridle-path over which they galloped, with its certain footing beneath and clean sweep from the boughs above. The blood surged hotly through his heart, and he was angry for the first time in his life; but his head was cool, and the damp air of the forest flowing by tranquilized him into a new elation of spirit. Jerry Dangerfield was the dearest and noblest and bravest girl in the world—he knew that: and she was clever and resourceful enough to devise means for preserving her father's official and private honor; and not less quick to defend herself from insult from a titled scoundrel. She was the most inexplicable of girls; but at the same time she was beyond any question the wisest. The thought that he should now see her soon, after all the years that had passed since he had introduced her to his sister at Raleigh, filled him with wild delight, and he prayed that in her mad flight from the Duke of Ballywinkle no harm might come to her.

The three men rode out into the broad highway at the red bungalow and paused to listen.

"He hasn't got here yet. Only one person has passed and these must be the tracks of the girl's horse," said Cooke, who had dismounted and struck matches, the better to observe the faint hoof-prints in the hard shell road.

"He'll be along in a minute. Let us get into the shadow of the bungalow, and when he comes we'll ride out and nail him. The bungalow's a sort of way house. I often stop here when I'm out on the estate and want to rest. I have the key in my pocket."

As Ardmore's keys jingled in the lock Cooke cried out softly. Their quarry was riding swiftly toward them, and he drew rein before the bungalow as Cooke and Collins rode out to meet him.

"I say," panted the duke.

"You are our prisoner. Dismount and come into this house."

"Prisoner, you fool! I'm a guest at Ardsley and I'm looking for a lady."

"That's a very unlikely story. Collins, help the gentleman down;" and the reporter obeyed instructions with so much zeal that the noble gentleman fell prone, and

was assisted to his feet with a fine mockery of helpfulness.

"I tell you I'm looking for a lady whose horse ran away with her! I'm the Duke of Ballywinkle and brother-in-law to Mr. Ardmore. I'll have you sent to jail if you stop me here."

"Come along, Duke, and we'll see what you look like," said Cooke, leading the way to the bungalow veranda. Within Ardmore was lighting lamps. There was a long room finished in black oak, with a fireplace at one end, and a table in the center. The floors were covered with handsome rugs and the walls were hung with photographs and etchings. Ardmore sat on the back of a leather settee in a pose assumed at the moment of the duke's entrance. It was a pose of entire nonchalance, and Ardmore's cap, perched on the back of his head, and his brown hair rumpled boyishly, added to the general effect of comfort and ease.

The duke blinked for a moment in the lamplight, then he roared out joyously:

"Ardy, old man!" and advanced toward his brother-in-law with outstretched hand.

"Keep him off; he's undoubtedly quite mad," said Ardmore, staring coldly, and bending his riding-crop

across his knees. "Collins, please ride on after the lady and bring her back this way."

Cooke had seated the prisoner rather rudely in a chair, and the noble duke, having lost the power of speech in amazement and fright, rubbed his eyes and then fastened them incredulously on Ardmore; but there was no question about it, he had been seized with violence; he had been repudiated by his own brother-in-law—the useless, stupid Tommy Ardmore, who, at best, had only a child's mind for pirate stories and who was indubitably the most negligible of negligible figures in the drama of life as the duke knew it.

"Cooke," began Ardmore, addressing his lieutenant gravely from his perch on the settee, "what is the charge against this person?"

"He says he's a duke," grinned Cooke, taking his cue from Ardmore's manner. "And he says he's visiting at Ardsley."

"That," said Ardmore with decision, "is creditable only to the gentleman's romantic imagination. His face is anything but dukely, and there's a red streak across it which points clearly to the recent sharp blow of a weapon; and no one would ever strike a duke. It's utterly incredible," and Ardmore lifted his brows and

leaned back with his arms at length and his hands clasping the riding-crop, as he contemplated with supreme satisfaction the tell-tale red line across the duke's cheek.

The Duke of Ballywinkle leaped to his feet, the color that suffused his pale face hiding for the moment the mark of the riding-stick.

"What the devil is this joke, Ardy?" screamed the duke. "You know I'm a guest at your house; you know I'm your sister's husband. I was riding with Miss Dangerfield and her horse ran away with her, and she may come to harm unless I go after her. This cut on the face I got from a low limb of one of your infernal trees. You are putting me in a devil of an embarrassing position by holding me here."

He spoke with dignity, and Ardmore heard him through in silence; but when he had finished, the master of Ardsley pointed to the chair.

"As I understand you, you are pleading not guilty; and you pretend to some acquaintance with me; but I am unable to recall you. We may have met somwhere, sometime, but I really don't know you. The title to which you pretend is unfamiliar to me; but I will frankly disclose to you that I, sir, am the governor of North Carolina."

"The what?" bleated the duke, his eyes bulging.

"I repeat, that I am the governor of North Carolina, and as a state of war now exists in my unhappy kingdom, I, sir, have assumed all the powers conferred upon the three coördinate branches of government under the American system, namely, or if you prefer it, I will say, to wit: the legislative, the executive and the judicial. It is thus not only my privilege but my painful duty to pass upon your case in all its sad aspects. As I have already suspended the writ of habeas corpus and set aside the right to trial by jury we will consider that I sit here as the supreme court."

"For God's sake, Ardy—" howled the duke.

"That remark I will not now construe as profanity, but don't let it occur again. The first charge against you is that of insulting a woman on the Sunset Trail in the estate called Ardsley, owned by a person known in law as Thomas Ardmore. There are three witnesses to the fact that you tried to stop a woman in the road, and that streak on your face is even more conclusive. Are you guilty or not guilty?"

"You are mad! You are crazy!" shouted the duke; but his face was very white now, and the mark of the crop flamed scarlet.

"You are guilty, beyond any question. But the further charge against you that you pretend to be—what did he say his name was, Cooke?—that you pretend to be the Duke of Ballywinkle must now be considered. That is quite right, is it; you say you are the Duke?"

"Yes; you fool!" howled the duke. "I'll have the law on you for this! I'll appeal to the British ambassador."

"I advise you not to appeal to anybody," said Ardmore, "and the British ambassador is without jurisdiction in North Carolina. You have yourself asserted that you are the Duke of Ballywinkle. Why Ballywinkle? Why not Argyll; why not Westminster? Why not, if duke you must be, the noble Duke of York?"

The Duke of Ballywinkle sat staring, stupefied. The whole thing was one of his silly brother-in-law's stupid jokes; there was no question of that; and Tommy Ardmore was always a bore; but in spite of the comfort he derived from these reflections the duke was not a little uneasy; for he had never seen his brother-in-law in just this mood, and he did not like it. Ardmore was carrying the joke too far; and there was an assurance in Ardmore's tone, and a light in Ardmore's eyes that were ominous. Cooke had meanwhile lighted his pipe and was calmly smoking until his chief should have his fling.

Ardmore now drew from his pocket Johnston's *American Politics* with an air of greatest seriousness.

"Cooke," he said, half to himself as he turned the pages, "do you remember just what the constitution says about dukes? Oh, yes; here we are! Now, Mr. Duke of Ballywinkle, listen to what it says here in Section IX of the Constitution of the United States, which reads exactly as follows in this book: 'No title of nobility shall be granted by the United States: And no person holding any office of profit or trust under them, shall, without the consent of the Congress, accept of any present, emolument, office, or title, of any kind whatever, from any king, prince, or foreign state.' And it says in Section X that 'No state shall grant any title of nobility.' Now, Mr. Ballywinkle, it is perfectly clear that this government can't recognize anything that it can't create, for that would be foolish. As I, the governor of North Carolina, can't make a duke, I can't see one. You are therefore wholly illegal; it's against the most sacred law of the land for you to be here at all; and, painful though it is to me, it is nevertheless my duty to order you to leave the United States at once, never to return. In fact, if you ever appear in the United States again, I hereby order that you be hanged by the neck until you be dead.

One of Mr. Cooke's men will accompany you to New York to-morrow and see to it that you take passage on a steamer bound for a British port. The crime of having insulted a woman will still hang over you until you are well east of Sandy Hook, and I advise you not to risk being tried on that charge in North Carolina, as my people are very impulsive and emotional and lynchings are not infrequent in our midst. You shall spend to-night in my official caboose some distance from here, and your personal effects will be brought from Ardsley, where, you have said, you are a guest of Mr. Thomas Ardmore, who is officially unknown to me. The supreme court will now adjourn."

Cooke pulled the limp, bewildered duke to his feet, and dragged him from the bungalow.

As they stepped out on the veranda Collins rode up in alarm.

"I followed this road to a cross-road where it becomes a bridle-path and runs off into the forest. There I lost all trace of the lady, but here is her riding-crop."

"Cooke, take your prisoner to the caboose; and Collins, come with me," commanded Ardmore; and a moment later he and the reporter rode off furiously in search of Jerry Dangerfield.

CHAPTER XIII

MISS DANGERFIELD TAKES A PRISONER

A dozen men carrying rifles across their saddle-bows rode away from Habersham's farm on the outskirts of Turner Court House and struck a rough trail that led a devious course over the hills. At their head rode the guide of the expedition—a long silent man on a mule. Griswold and Habersham followed immediately behind him on horseback. Their plans had been carefully arranged before they left their rendezvous, and save for an occasional brief interchange between the prosecuting attorney and the governor's special representative, the party jogged on in silence. Habersham's recruits were, it may be said, farmers of the border, who had awaited for years just such an opportunity as now offered to avenge themselves upon the insolent Appleweights. Nearly every man of the party had some private score to settle, but they had all been sworn as special constables and were sobered by the knowledge that the power of the state of South Carolina was back of them.

Thus, at the very hour that Mr. Ardmore and his lieutenants rode away from the lonely anchorage of the caboose, Professor Griswold and his cavalcade set out for Mount Nebo Church. While the master of Ardsley was revenging himself upon the Duke of Ballywinkle, his dearest friend, against whom he had closed the doors of his house, was losing no time in setting forth upon a mission which, if successful, would seriously interfere with all Mr. Ardmore's hopes and plans. Ardmore's scarlet fever telegram no longer rankled in the breast of the associate professor of admiralty of the University of Virginia, for Griswold knew that no matter what might be the outcome of his effort to uphold the dignity of the sovereign state of South Carolina, his participation in any such adventure would so cover his friend with envy that he would have him forever at his mercy. Thomas Ardsley deserved punishment—there was no doubt of that, and as Professor Griswold was not more or less than a human being, he took comfort of the reflection.

The guide of the expedition pushed his mule forward at a fast walk, making no excuses to Griswold and Habersham for the roughness of the trails he chose, nor troubling to give warning of sharp turns where a horse,

being less wise than a mule, tobogganed madly before finding a foothold. Occasionally a low hanging limb switched the associate professor sharply across the face, but his temper continued serene where the trail was darkest and steepest, and he found himself ignoring Habersham's occasional polite questions about the university in his effort to summon up in memory certain ways of Barbara Osborne which baffled him. He deplored the time he had given to the study of a stupid profession like the law, when, if he had applied himself with equal diligence to poetry, he might have made for himself a place at least as high in belles-lettres. In his college days he had sometimes thrummed a guitar, and there was a little song in his heart, half formed, and with only a line or two as yet tangible, which he felt sure he could write down on paper if it were not that the bugles summoned him to war; it was a song of a white rose which a lover wore in his heart, through winter and summer, and it never changed, and the flight of the seasons had no manner of effect on it.

"Check up, cain't you?" snarled the man on the mule, laying hold of Griswold's rein; and thus halted, Griswold found that they had been circling round a curiously symmetrical, thickly wooded hill, and had finally

come to a clearing whence they were able to gaze far off toward the north.

"We are almost out of bounds," said Habersham, pointing. "Over there somewhere, across the hills, lies North Carolina. I am as thoroughly lost as you can possibly be; but these men know where they are. How far is it, Billy"—he addressed the silent guide—"to Mount Nebo?"

"About four mile, and I reckon we'd better let out a leetle now or they'll sing the doxology before we git thar."

"What's that light away off there?" asked Habersham.

The guide paused to examine it, and the faint glow far down the vale seemed to perplex him. He spoke to one or two other natives and they viewed the light ruminatively, as is their way.

"Thet must be on Ardmore's land," said the leader finally. "It shoots out all sorts o' ways round hyeh, and I reckon thet's about wheh Raccoon Creek cuts through."

"That's very likely," said Habersham. "I've seen the plat of what Ardmore owns on this side the border at the court house, and I remember that there's a long strip in Mingo County that is Ardsley land. Ardmore

has houses of one kind and another scattered all over the estate and those lights may be from one of them. You know the place, don't you?"

"Yes; I've visited there," admitted Griswold. "But we'd better give it a wide berth. The whole estate is simply infested with scarlet fever. They're quarantined."

"I guess that's a joke," said Habersham. "There's a big party on there now, and I have seen some of the guests in Turner's within a day or two."

"Within how many days?" demanded Griswold, his heart sinking at the thought that Ardmore had lied to him to keep him away from Ardsley—from Ardmore's house! The thought of it really hurt him now. Could it be possible that Ardmore had guests so distinguished that he, Griswold, was not worthy to make their acquaintance! He experienced a real pang as he thought that here he was, within a short ride of the home of his dearest friend, the man whom most he loved of all men, and that he had been denied the door of that friend's house.

"Come on!" called Habersham.

Half the company rode ahead to gain the farther side of the church; the remainder, including Griswold and

Habersham, soon dismounted and tied their horses out of sight of the country road which they had latterly been following.

"We are in plenty of time," said Habersham, looking at his watch. "The rest of the boys are closing in from the other side and they will be ready for Appleweight when he finishes his devotions. We've been studying the old man's habits and he has a particular place where he ties his horse back of the church. It's a little apart from the fence where most of the congregation hitch, and he chose it, no doubt, because in case of a surprise he would have plenty of room for maneuvering. Two men are going to lay for him, seize and gag him and carry him into the wood back of the church; and then we're off across the state line to lock him up in jail at Kildare and give Governor Dangerfield the shock of his life."

"It sounds simple enough; but it won't be long before Appleweight's friends miss him. You must remember that they are a shrewd lot."

"We've got to take our chances. Let's hope we are as shrewd as they are," replied Habersham.

They moved softly through the wood and presently the faint sound of singing reached them.

"Old Rabdick has finished his sermon and we'll know the worst in a few minutes."

One of the party had already detached himself and crept forward toward the church, to meet his appointed comrade in the enterprise, who was to come in from the other side.

The clapboard church presented in the moonlight the austerest outlines, and as the men waited, a rude though unseen hand was slamming the wooden shutters that protected the windows from impious violence.

"We could do with less moon," muttered Habersham, as he and Griswold peered through the trees into the churchyard.

"There goes Bill Appleweight now," whispered one of the natives at his elbow, and Griswold felt his heart-beats quicken as he watched a tall figure silhouetted against the church and moving swiftly toward the rear of the building. At the front of the church voices sounded, as the departing worshipers rode or drove slowly away.

Habersham laid his hand suddenly on Griswold's arm.

"They've got him! They've nailed him! See! There! They're yanking him back into the timber. They've taken him and his horse!"

Griswold saw nothing but a momentary confusion of shadows, then perfect silence hung over the woods behind the little church. The congregation was slowly dispersing, riding away in little groups. Suddenly a voice called out in the road a hundred yards beyond the church:

"Hey there! Where's Bill?"

"Oh, he's gone long ago!" yelled another.

In a moment more the church door slammed and a last figure rode rapidly away.

"Now we'll see what's happened," said Habersham. "It looks almost too easy."

The members of Griswold's party who had been thrown round to the farther side of the church began to appear, one at a time. There was no nervousness among any of the band—a fact that impressed Griswold. They were all risking much in this enterprise, but they were outwardly unperturbed, and chewing their tobacco silently while they awaited the return of the two active agents in the conspiracy who had dealt directly with Appleweight. Habersham counted heads, and announced all present or accounted for.

The tall leader who had ridden the mule was the first to rise out of the underbrush, through which he had

crawled circuitously from the rear of the church. His companion followed a few seconds later.

"We've got Bill, all tied and gagged and a-settin' of his hoss," drawled the leader, "and the hoss is tied to the back fence. Rest o' his boys thought he'd gone ahead, but they may miss him and come back. He's safe enough, and ef we keep away from him we'll be ready to light out ef the gang scents trouble and comes back to look fer Bill."

"You're sure he's tied up so he can't break away or yell?"

"He's as good as dead, a-settin' of his hoss in the thicket back theh."

"And now," said Habersham, "what we've got to do is to make a run for it and land him across the border, and stick him into a North Carolina jail, where he rightfully belongs. The question is, can we do it all in one night, or had we better lock him up somewhere on this side the line and take another night for it? The sheriff over there in Kildare is Appleweight's cousin, but we'll lock him up with Bill, to make a family party of it."

"We'd better not try too much to-night," counseled Griswold. "It's a big thing to have the man himself. If it were not for the matter of putting Governor Dan-

gerfield in a hole, I'd favor hurrying with Appleweight to Columbia, just for the moral effect of it on the people of South Carolina. We'd make a big killing for the administration that way, Habersham."

"Yes, you'd make a killing all right, but you'd have Bill Appleweight on your hands, which Governor Osborne has not until lately been anxious for," replied Habersham, in a low tone that was heard by no one but his old preceptor.

"You'd better get over the idea that we're afraid of this outlaw," rejoined Griswold. "The governor of North Carolina dare not call his soul his own where these hill people are concerned; but the governor of South Carolina is a different sort."

"The governor of North Carolina is filling the newspapers with his own virtuous intentions in the matter," remarked Habersham, "but his sudden zeal puts one upon inquiry."

"I hope you don't imply that the motives of the governor of South Carolina are not the worthiest?" demanded Griswold hotly.

"Most certainly not!" returned the prosecuting attorney; but a smile flitted across his face—a smile which, in the darkness, Griswold did not see. "The two gov-

ernors are very different men—wholly antipodal characters, in fact," and again Habersham smiled to himself.

While they thus stood on South Carolina soil, waiting for the safe and complete dispersion of the Mount Nebo congregation before seizing the captive they had gagged and tied at the rear of the little church, the fates were ordering a very different termination of the night's business.

Miss Jerry Dangerfield, galloping away from the Duke of Ballywinkle, with no thought but to widen the distance between them, turned off at the first cross-road, which began well enough, but degenerated rapidly into a miserable trail, through which she was obliged to walk her horse. Before she was aware of it she was in the midst of a clearing where laborers had lately been cutting timber, and she found, on turning to make her way out, that she was quite lost, for three trails, all seemingly alike, struck off into the forest. She spoke aloud to the horse to reassure herself, and smiled as she viewed the grim phalanx of stumps. She must, however, find her way back to Ardsley, for there were times when Jerry Dangerfield could be very serious with herself, though it rarely pleased her to be serious with other people; and she knew that the time had long

passed for her return to the house. If her conspiracy with Thomas Ardmore had proved successful, the duke would not return to the great house; but her own prolonged absence was something that had not been in her program.

She did not know then that three men had witnessed her flight from the duke, or that they had taken swift vengeance upon him for his unpardonable conduct in the moon-blanched road. It was not Jerry's way to accept misfortune tamely, and after circling the wall of timber that shut her in, in the hope of determining where she had entered, she chose a trail at random and plunged into the woods. She assumed that probably all the roads and paths on the estate led more or less directly to the great house or to some lodge or bungalow. She had lost her riding-crop in her mad flight, and she broke off a switch, tossing its leaves into the moonlight and laughing softly as they rained about her.

Jerry began whistling gently to herself, for she had never been lost before, and it is not so bad, when you have a good horse, a fair path, sweet odorous woods and the moon to keep you company. She forded a brook that was silver to eye and ear, and let her horse stand midway of it for joy in the sight and sound. She had

kept no account of time, but rather imagined that it had not been more than half an hour since the Duke of Ballywinkle left her so unceremoniously.

Suddenly ahead of her through the woods floated the sound of singing—one of those strange, wavering *pieux cantiques* peculiar to the South. She rode on, thinking to find help and a guide back to Ardsley; then the music ceased, and lights now flashed faintly before her, but she went forward guardedly.

"I'm much more lost than I thought I was, for I must be away off the estate," she reflected. She turned and rode back a few rods and dismounted, and tied her horse to a sapling. She was disappointed at not finding a camp of Ardmore's wood-cutters, to whom she would unhesitatingly have confided herself; but it seemed wise now to exercise caution in drawing to herself the attention of strangers. She did not know that she had crossed the state line and was in South Carolina, or that the singing she had heard floated from the windows of Mount Nebo Church.

She became now the astonished witness of a series of incidents that occurred so swiftly as fairly to take her breath away. A tall, loosely articulated man came from the direction of the church and walked toward her. She

knelt at the tree and watched, the moonlight giving her a clear view of a rustic somewhat past middle age, whose chief characteristics seemed to be a grizzled beard and long arms that swung oddly at his side. The brim of his wool hat was turned up sharply from his forehead, and she had a glimpse of the small, keen, gray eyes with which he swept the forest before him. He freed a horse which she had not before noticed, and she concluded that he would not approach nearer, for she expected him to mount and ride away to join others of the congregation whom she heard making off in a road beyond the church. Then, with a quickness and deftness that baffled her eyes, two men rose beside him just as he was about to mount; there was no outcry and no sound of scuffling, so quick was the descent and so perfect the understanding between the captors. In a moment the man was gathered up, bound, and flung on his saddle. She had a better view of him, now that he was hatless, though a gag had been forced into his mouth and a handkerchief tied over his eyes, so that he presented a grotesque appearance. Jerry was so absorbed that she forgot to be afraid; never in her life had she witnessed anything so amazing as this; and now, to her more complete bewilderment, the captors, after carefully in-

specting their work and finding it satisfactory, seemed to disappear utterly from the face of the earth.

In the woods to her left she thought she heard a horse neigh; then she saw shadows moving in that direction; and again, from the road, she heard the brief debate of the two men as to the whereabouts of "Bill"; and it struck Jerry humorously that he would not soon see his friends unless they came and helped him out of his predicament.

It may help to an understanding of Miss Jerry Dangerfield's character if it is recorded here that never in her short life had she failed to respond to the call of impulse. She was lost in the woods, and strange men lurked about; a man had been attacked, seized, and left sitting in a state of absurd helplessness on a horse presumably his own, and there was no guessing what dire penalty his captors had in store for him. He certainly looked deliciously funny as he sat there in the shadows, vigorously twisting his arms and head in an effort to free himself.

Quiet reigned in the neighborhood of the church; the lights had blinked out; the bang of the closing shutters reassured Jerry, and she crept on her knees toward the unconscious captive, loosed his horse's rein and led it

rapidly toward her own horse, a little farther back in the woods. Her blindfolded prisoner, thinking his original captors were carrying him off, renewed his efforts to free himself. He tested the ropes and straps with which he was fastened by throwing himself first to one side, then to the other, as far as his gyves would permit, at the same time frothily chewing his gag.

Jerry gained her own saddle in the least bit of a panic, and when she had mounted and made sure of the leading-strap with which her prisoner's horse was provided, she rode on at a rapid walk until she reached the clearing, where the stumps again grimly mocked her. She stopped to listen, and heard through the still night first one cry and then many voices in various keys of alarm and rage. Then she bent toward the prisoner, tore the bandage from his eyes, and with more difficulty freed him of the gag. He blinked and spluttered at this unexpected deliverance, then blinked and spluttered afresh at seeing that his captor was a young woman, who was plainly not of his world. Jerry watched him wonderingly, then addressed him in her most agreeable tone.

"You were caught and tied by two men over there by a church. I saw them, and when they went off and left

you, I came along and brought you with me, thinking to save your life. I want to get home as quickly as possible, and though I do not know you, and am quite sure we never met before, I hope you will kindly guide me to Ardsley, and thereby render me a service I shall always deeply appreciate."

Mr. Bill Appleweight, *alias* Poteet, was well hardened to the shocks of time, but this pleasant-voiced girl, coolly sitting her horse, and holding his own lank steed by a strap, was the most amazing human being that had yet dawned on his horizon. He was not stupid, but Jerry's manner of speech had baffled more sophisticated minds than Appleweight's, and the sweet sincerity of her tone, and her frank countenance, hallowed as it was by the moonlight, wrought in the outlaw's mind a befuddlement not wholly unlike that which had possessed the wits of many young gallants south of the Potomac who had laid siege to Jerry Dangerfield's heart. But the cries behind them were more pronounced, and Appleweight was nothing if not a man of action.

"Take these things off'n me," he commanded fiercely, "and I'll see y' safe to Ardsley."

"Not in the least," replied Jerry, who was herself not unmindful of the voices behind. "You will kindly tell

me the way, and I will accommodate my pace to that of your own somewhat ill-nourished beast. And as there's a mob looking for you back there, all ready to hang you to one of these noble forest trees, I advise you to use more haste and less caution in pointing the way."

Appleweight lifted his head and took his bearings. Then he nodded toward one of the three trails which had so baffled Jerry when first she broke into the clearing.

"Thet's the nighest," said Appleweight, "and we'd better git."

She set the pace at a trot, and was relieved in a few minutes to pass one or two landmarks which she remembered from her flight through the woods. As they splashed through the brook she had forded, she was quite confident that the captive was playing her no trick, but that in due course she should strike the highroad to Ardsley which she had abandoned to throw off the Duke of Ballywinkle.

It was now ten o'clock, and the moon was sinking behind the forest trees. Jerry took advantage of an occasional straight strip of road to go forward at a gallop, but these stretches did not offer frequently, and the two riders kept pretty steadily to a smart trot. They pre-

sented a droll picture as they moved through the forest —the girl, riding cross-saddle, with the stolen captive trailing after. Occasionally Mr. Appleweight seemed to be talking to himself, but whether he was praying or swearing Jerry did not trouble herself to decide. It was enough for her that she had found a guide out of the wilderness by stealing a prisoner from his enemies, and this was amusing, and sent bubbling in her heart those quiet springs of mirth that accounted for so much in Jerry Dangerfield.

As they walked their horses through a bit of sand, the prisoner spoke:

"Who air y'u, little gal?"

Jerry turned in the saddle, so that Appleweight enjoyed a full view of her face.

"I am perfectly willing to tell you my name, but first it would be more courteous for you to tell me yours, particularly as I am delivering you from a band of outlaws who undoubtedly intended to do you harm."

"I reckon they air skeered to foller us, gal. They air afeard to tackle th' ole man, onless they jump in two t' one; and they cain't tell who helped me git away."

He laughed—a curious, chuckling laugh. He had ceased to struggle at his bonds, but seemed resigned to

his strange fate. He had not answered Jerry's question, and had no intention of doing so. The sudden attack at the church had aroused all his cunning. Appleweight, *alias* Poteet, was an old wolf, and knew well the ways of the trapper; but the bold attempt to kidnap him was a new feature of the game as heretofore played along the border. He did not make it out; nor was he wholly satisfied with the girl's explanation of her own presence in that out-of-the-way place. She might be a guest at Ardsley, as she pretended, but women folk were rarely seen on the estate, and never in such remote corners of it as Mount Nebo Church. As he pondered the matter, it seemed incredible that this remarkable young person, whose innocence was so beguiling, should be in any way leagued with his foes.

He had several times called out directions as they crossed other paths in the forest, and they now reached the main trunk road of the estate. The red bungalow, Jerry knew, was not far away. Her prisoner spoke again.

"Little gal, I'm an ole man, and I hain't never done y'u no harm. Your haouse is only a leetle way up thar, and I cain't be no more use to y'u. I want t' go home, and if y'u'll holp me ontie this yere harness—" and he

grinned as he viewed his bonds in the fuller light of the open road.

Then hoof-beats thumped the soft earth of another of the trails that converged at this point, and Ardmore and Collins flashed out upon Jerry and her captive, amid a wild panic of horses.

Appleweight twisted and turned in his saddle but Jerry instantly held up her hand and arrested the inquiries of her deliverers.

"Mr. Ardmore, this gentleman was most rudely set upon by two strangers as he was leaving a church over there somewhere in the woods. I was lost, and as his appearance at the time and place seemed almost providential, I begged him to guide me toward home, which he has most courteously done," and Jerry, to give the proper touch to her explanation, twitched the strap by which she held her prisoner's horse, so that it danced, adding a fresh absurdity to the wobbling figure of its bound rider.

"You are safe!" cried Ardmore in a low tone, to which Jerry nodded carelessly, in a way that directed attention to the more immediate business at hand. He was not at once sure of his cue, but there seemed to be something familiar in the outlines of the man on horse-

back, and full identification broke upon him now with astounding vividness.

"Jugs," he began, addressing the prisoner smilingly, "dear old Jugs, to think we should meet again! Since you handed me that jug on the rear end of the train, a few nights ago, life has had new meanings for me, and I'm just as sorry as can be that I gave you the buttermilk. I wouldn't have done such a thing for billions in real money. And now that you have fallen into the excellent hands of Miss Dangerfield—"

"Dangerfield!" screamed the prisoner, lifting himself as high in the saddle as his bonds would permit.

"Certainly," replied Ardmore. "Your rescuer is none other than Miss Geraldine Dangerfield."

"Why, gal," began the outlaw, "ef your pa's the guv'nor of No'th Caroline, him an' me's old frien's."

"Then will you kindly tell me your name?" asked Jerry.

"Allow me to complete the introductions," interrupted Collins, who had hung back in silence. "Unless my eyes deceive me, which is wholly improbable, this is a gentleman whom I once interviewed in the county jail at Raleigh, and he was known at that time as William Appleweight, *alias* Potect."

"You air right," admitted the prisoner without hesitation, and then, addressing Jerry: "Yer pa would be glad to know his dorter had helped an ole frien' like me, gal. Ye may hev heard him speak o' me."

"But how about that message in the cork of the jug you put on the train at Kildare?" demanded Ardmore. "And why did you send your brother to try to scare me to death at Raleigh?"

"That is not the slightest importance," interrupted Jerry, gently playing with the tether which held Mr. Appleweight; "nor does it matter that papa and this gentleman are friends. If this is, indeed, the famous outlaw, Mr. William Appleweight, then, papa or no papa, friend or no friend, he is a prisoner of the state of North Carolina."

"Pris'ner!" bawled Appleweight,—"an' you the guv'nor's gal—"

"You have hit the situation exactly, Mr. Appleweight; and as far as the office of governor is concerned, it is capably filled by the young gentleman on your left, Mr. Thomas Ardmore. Let us now adjourn to his house, where, if I am not mistaken, a bit of cold fowl is usually to be found on the sideboard at this hour. But hold"— and Jerry checked her horse—"where can we

lodge this gentleman, Mr. Ardmore, until we decide upon his further fate?"

"We might put him in the wine cellar," suggested Ardmore.

"No," interposed Collins. "I fancy that much of your fluid stock has paid revenue tax, and most of it has passed none too lightly through the custom-house. It would be unwarrantably cruel to lock Mr. Appleweight in such quarters, with the visible marks of taxation all around him. Still, the sight of the stamps would probably destroy his thirst, though his rugged independence might so far assert itself that he would smash a few of your most expensive importations out of sheer deviltry."

"He shall be treated with the greatest consideration," said Jerry, and thereafter, no further adventure befalling them, they reached Ardsley, where their arrival occasioned the greatest excitement.

CHAPTER XIV

A MEETING OF OLD FRIENDS

Habersham's men had proved exceedingly timid when it came to the business of threshing the woods for Appleweight, whom they regarded with a new awe, now that he had vanished so mysteriously. They had searched the woods guardedly, but the narrow paths that led away into the dim fastnesses of Ardsley were forbidding, and these men were not without their superstitions. They had awaited for years an opportunity to strike at the Appleweight faction; they had at last taken their shot, and had seemingly brought down their bird; but their lack of spirit in retrieving the game had been their undoing. They had only aroused their most formidable enemy, who would undoubtedly lose no time in seeking revenge. They were a dolorous band who, after warily beating the woods, dispersed in the small hours of the morning, having found nothing but Appleweight's wool hat, which only added to their mystification.

"We ought to have taken him away on the run," said

Habersham bitterly, as he and Griswold discussed the matter on the veranda of the prosecutor's house and watched the coming of the dawn. "I didn't realize that those fellows lived in such mortal terror of the old man; but they refused to make off with him until the last of his friends had got well out of the way. I ought to have had more sense myself than to have expected the old fox to sit tied up like a calf ready for market. We had all his friends accounted for—those that weren't at prayer meeting were marked down somewhere else, and we had a line flung pretty well round the church. Appleweight's deliverance must have come from somewhere inside the Ardmore property. Perhaps the game warden picked him up."

"Perhaps the Indians captured him," suggested Griswold, yawning, "or maybe some Martian came down on a parachute and hauled him up. Or, as scarlet fever is raging at Mr. Ardmore's castle,"—and his tone was icy—"Appleweight was probably seized all of a sudden, and broke away in his delirium. Let's go to bed."

At eight o'clock he and Habersham rode into Turner Court House, and Griswold went at once to the inn to change his clothes. No further steps could be taken until some definite report was received as to Apple-

weight's whereabouts. The men who had attempted the outlaw's capture had returned to their farms, and were most demurely cultivating the soil. Griswold was thoroughly disgusted at the ridiculous failure of Habersham's plans, and not less severe upon himself for failing to push matters to a conclusion the moment the outlaw was caught, instead of hanging back to await the safe dispersion of the Mount Nebo congregation.

It had been the most puerile transaction possible, and he was aware that a report of it, which he must wire at once to Miss Barbara Osborne, would not impress that young woman with his capacity or trustworthiness in difficult occasions. The iron that had already entered into his soul drove deeper. He had ordered a fresh horse, and was resolved to return to Mount Nebo Church for a personal study of the ground in broad daylight.

As he crossed the musty parlor of the little hotel, to his great astonishment Miss Osborne's black Phœbe, stationed where her eyes ranged the whole lower floor of the inn, drew attention to herself in an elaborate courtesy.

"Miss Barb'ra wish me t' say she done come heah on business, and she like fo' to see yo' all right away. She done bring huh seddle, and war a-gwine ridin' twell you

come back. She's a-gittin' ready, and I'll go tell huh you done come. She got a heap o' trubble, thet young missis, so she hev," and the black woman's pursed lips seemed to imply that Professor Griswold was in some measure responsible for Miss Osborne's difficulties.

As he stared out into the street a negro brought a horse bearing a better saddle than Mingo County had ever boasted, and hitched it near the horse he had secured for himself. An instant later he heard a quick step above, and Miss Osborne, sedately followed by the black woman, came down-stairs. She smiled and greeted him cordially, but there was trouble in her brown eyes.

"I didn't warn you of my coming. I didn't want to be a nuisance to you; but there's a new—a most unaccountable perplexity. It doesn't seem right to burden you with it—you have already been so kind about helping me; but I dare not turn to our oldest friends—I have been afraid to trust father's friends at all since Mr. Bosworth acted so traitorously."

"My time is entirely at your service, Miss Osborne; but I have a shameful report to make of myself. I must tell you how miserably I have failed, before you trust me any further. We—that is to say, the prosecuting attorney of this county and a party he got together of

Appleweight's enemies—caught the outlaw last night—took him with the greatest ease—but he got away from us! It was all my fault, and I'm deeply disgusted with myself!"

He described the capture and the subsequent mysterious disappearance of Appleweight, and confessed the obvious necessity for great caution in further attempts to take the outlaw, now that he was on guard. Barbara laughed reassuringly at the end of the story.

"Those men must have felt funny when they went back to get the prisoner and found that he had gone up into the air. But there's a new feature of the case that's more serious than the loss of this man—" and the trouble again possessed her eyes.

"Well, it's better not to have our problems too simple. Any lawyer can win an easy case—though I seem to have lost my first one for you," he added penitently.

She made no reply, but drew from her purse a cutting from a newspaper and handed it to him.

"That's from last night's Columbia *Vidette,* which is very hostile to my father."

He was already running over the heavily leaded column that set forth without equivocation the fact that Governor Osborne had not been in Columbia since he

went to New Orleans. It scouted the story that he was abroad in the state on official business connected with the Appleweight case—the yarn which Griswold had forced upon the friendly reporter at the telegraph office in Columbia. The governor of a state, the *Vidette* went on to elaborate, could not vanish without leaving some trace of himself, and a *Vidette* representative had traced the steps of Governor Osborne from New Orleans until —the italics are the *Vidette's*—he had again entered South Carolina *under cover of night and for purposes which, for the honor of the state, the Vidette hesitated to disclose.*

The writer of the article had exhausted the possibilities of gentle suggestion and vague innuendo in an effort to create an impression of mystery and to pique curiosity as to further developments, which were promised at any hour. Griswold's wrath was aroused, not so much against the newspaper, which he assumed had some fire for its smothered trifle of smoke, but against the governor of South Carolina himself, who was causing the finest and noblest girl in the world infinite anxiety and pain.

"The thing is preposterous," he said lightly. "The idea that your father would attempt to enter his own

state surreptitiously is inconceivable in these days when public men are denied all privacy, and when it's any man's right to deceive the press if he finds it essential to his own comfort and peace; but the intimation that your father is in South Carolina for any dishonorable purpose is preposterous. One thing, however, is certain, Miss Osborne, and that is that we must produce your father at the earliest possible moment."

"But"—and Barbara hesitated, and her eyes, near tears as they were, wrought great havoc in Griswold's soul—"but father must not be found until this Appleweight matter is settled. You understand without making me speak the words—that he might not exactly view the matter as we do."

It was a painful subject; and the fact that she was driven by sheer force of circumstances to appeal to him, a stranger, to aid her to perform a public service in her father's name rallied all his good impulses to her standard. It was too delicate a matter for discussion; it was a thing to be ignored; and he assumed at once a lighter tone.

"Come! We must solve the riddle of the lost prisoner at once, and your father will undoubtedly give an excellent account of himself when he gets ready. Mean-

while the fiction that he is personally carrying the war into the Appleweight country must be maintained, and I shall step to the railway station and wire the Columbia newspaper in his name that he is in Mingo County on the trail of the outlaws."

The messages were composed by their joint efforts at the station, with not so much haste but that an associate professor of admiralty, twenty-nine years old, could defer in the most trifling matters to the superior literary taste of a girl of twenty whose brown eyes were very pleasant to meet in moments of uncertainty and appeal.

He signed the messages Charles Osborne, Governor, with a flourish indicative of the increased confidence and daring which Miss Osborne's arrival had brought to the situation.

"And now," said Griswold, as they rode through the meager streets of Turner's, "we will go to Mount Nebo Church and see what we can learn of Appleweight's disappearance."

"The North Carolina papers are making a great deal of Governor Dangerfield's activity in trying to put down outlawry on the border," said Barbara. "Marked copies of the newspapers are pouring into papa's office. I can but hold Mr. Bosworth responsible for that. We may

count upon it that he will do all in his power to annoy us"—and then, as Griswold looked at her quickly, he was aware that she had colored and averted her eyes; and while, as a lawyer, he was aware that words of two letters might be provocative of endless litigation of the bitterest sort, he had never known before that *us*, in itself the homeliest of words, could cause so sweet a distress. It seemed that an interval of several years passed before either spoke again.

"We are quite near the estate of your friend, Mr. Ardmore, aren't we?" asked Barbara presently.

"I fancy we are," replied Griswold, but with a tone so coldly at variance with his previous cordial references to the master of Ardsley that Barbara looked at him inquiringly.

"I'm sorry that I should have given you the impression, Miss Osborne, that Mr. Ardmore and I are friends, as I undoubtedly did at Columbia. He has, for some unaccountable reason, cut my acquaintance in a manner so unlike him that I do not pretend to explain it; nor, I may add, is it of the least importance."

"I was a little surprised," returned Barbara, with truly feminine instinct for mingling in the balm of consolation the bitterest and most poisonous herbs, "that

you should have had for a friend a man who frankly follows girls whose appearance he fancies. Even Mr. Ardmore's democratic enthusiasm for the down-trodden laundry girl does not wholly mitigate the winking episode."

"He had, only a few days ago, invited me to visit him, though I had been to his house so often that the obscurest servant knew that I was privileged even beyond the members of Mr. Ardmore's own family in my freedom of the place. When I saw that his house would be a convenient point from which to study the Appleweight situation, I wired him that I was on the way, and to my utter amazement he replied that he could not entertain me—that scarlet fever was epidemic on the estate—on those almost uncounted acres!"

And with a gulp and a mist in his eyes, Griswold drew rein and pointed, from a hill that had now borne them to a considerable height, toward Ardsley itself, dreamily basking in the bright morning sunlight within its cincture of hills, meadows and forest.

"I never saw the place before! It's perfectly splendid!" cried Barbara, forgetting that Griswold must be gazing upon it with the eyes of an exile viewing grim, forbidding battlements that once hailed him in welcome.

"It's one of the most interesting houses in America," observed Griswold, who strove at all times to be just.

"There's a flag flying—I can't make out what it is," said Barbara.

"It's probably to give warning of the scarlet fever; it would be like Ardy to do that. But we must hurry on to Mount Nebo."

He knew the ways of Ardsley thoroughly; better, in fact, than its owner ever had in old times; but in his anger at Ardmore he would not set foot on the estate if he could possibly avoid doing so in reaching the scene of the night's contretemps. He found without difficulty the trail taken by Habersham's men, and in due course of time they left their horses a short distance from the church and proceeded on foot.

"It seems all the stupider in broad daylight," said Griswold, after he had explained just what had occurred, and how the captors, in their superstitious awe of Appleweight, had been afraid to carry him off the moment they were sure of him, but had slipped back among their fellows to wait until the coast was perfectly clear. To ease his deep chagrin Barbara laughed a good deal at the occurrence as they tramped over the scene discussing it. They went into the woods back

of the church, where Griswold began to exercise his reasoning powers.

"Some one must have come in from this direction and freed the man and taken him away," he declared.

He knelt and marked the hoof-prints where Appleweight had been left tied; but the grass here was much trampled, and Griswold was misled by the fact, not knowing that news of Appleweight's strange disappearance had passed among the outlaw's friends by the swift telegraphy of the border, and that the whole neighborhood had been threshed over hours before. It might have been some small consolation to Griswold had he known that Appleweight's friends and accomplices were as much at a loss to know what had become of the chieftain as the men who had tried so ineffectually to kidnap him. From the appearance of the trampled grass many men had taken a hand in releasing the prisoner, and this impression did not clarify matters for Griswold.

"Where does this path lead?" asked Barbara.

"This is Ardsley land here, this side of the church, and that trail leads on, if I remember, to the main Ardsley highway, with which various other roads are connected—many miles in all. It's inconceivable that

the deliverers of this outlaw should have taken him into the estate, where a sort of police system is maintained by the forestry corps. I don't at all make it out."

He went off to explore the heavy woods on each side of the trail that led into Ardsley, but without result. When he came gloomily back he found that in his absence Barbara had followed the bridle-path for a considerable distance, and she held out to him a diminutive pocket handkerchief, which had evidently been snatched away from its owner—so Barbara explained—by a low-hanging branch of an oak, and flung into a blackberry bush, where she had found it. It was a trifle, indeed, the slightest bit of linen, which they held between them by its four corners and gravely inspected.

"Feminine, beyond a doubt," pronounced Griswold sagely.

"It's a good handkerchief, and here are two initials worked in the corner that may tell us something—'G. D.' It probably belongs to some guest at Ardsley. And there's a very faint suggestion of orris—it's a city handkerchief," said Barbara with finality, "but it has suffered a trifle in the laundry, as this edge is the least bit out of drawing from careless ironing."

"And I should say, from a certain crispness it still

retains, that it hasn't been in the forest long. It hasn't been rained on, at any rate," added Griswold.

"But even the handkerchief doesn't tell us anything," said Barbara, spreading it out, "except that some woman visitor has ridden here within a few days and played drop the handkerchief with herself or somebody else to us unknown."

"She may have been a scarlet fever patient from Ardsley; you'd better have a care!" And Griswold's tone was bitter.

"I'm not afraid; and as I have never been so near Ardsley before, I should like to ride in and steal a glimpse. There's little danger of meeting the lord of the manor, I suppose, or any of his guests at this hour, and we need not go near the house."

He saw that she was really curious, and it was not in his heart to refuse her, so they followed the bridle-path through the cool forest, and came in due course to the clearing where Jerry had first confessed herself lost, and thereafter had suffered the captured outlaw to point her the way home.

"The timber has been cut here since my last visit, but I remember the bridle-paths very well. They all reach the highroad of the estate ultimately. We may safely

take this one, which has been the most used and which climbs a hill that gives a fine outlook."

The path he chose had really been beaten into better condition than either of the others, and they rode side by side now. A deer feeding on a grassy slope raised its head and stared at them, and a fox scampered wildly before them. It seemed that they were shut in from all the world, these two, who but a few days before had never seen each other, and it was a relief to him to find that she threw off her troubles and became more animated and cheerful than he had yet seen her. His comments on her mount, which was sorry enough, were amusing; and she paused now and then to peer into the tops of the tallest trees, under the pretense that Appleweight had probably reverted to the primordial and might be found at any minute in one of the branches above them. Her dark green habit, and the soft hat to match, with its little feather thrust into the side, spoke for real usage; and the gauntleted hand that swung lightly at her side inadvertently brushed his own once—and he knew that this must not happen again! When their eyes met it was with frank confidence on her part, and it seemed to him that they were very old friends, and that they had been riding through this forest, or one identical with it, since

the world began. It is thus that a man with any imagination feels first about a woman who begins to interest him—that there was never any beginning to their acquaintance that can be reckoned as time and experience are measured, but that he has known her for countless years; and if there be a poetic vein in him, he will indulge in such fancies as that he has seen her as a priestess of Aphrodite in the long ago, dreaming upon the temple steps; or that he has watched her skipping pebbles upon the violet storied sea against a hazy background of cities long crumbled into dust. Such fancies as these are a part of love's gentle madness, and luckier than she knows is the girl who awakens in a lover this eager idealization. If he can turn a verse for her in which she is added to the sacred Nine, personifying all sweet, gentle and gracious things, so much the better.

Just what he, on the other hand, may mean to her; just what form of deification he evokes in her, he can never know; for the women who write of such matters have never been those who are sincere or worth heeding, and they never will be, so long as woman's heart remains what it has been from the beginning—far-hidden, and filled with incommunicable

secret beliefs and longings, and tremulous with fears that are beyond man's power to understand.

Griswold had missed the white rose that he had begun to associate with Barbara, and he grew suddenly daring and spoke of it.

"You haven't your rose to-day."

"Oh, I'm beyond the source of supply! I have a young friend, a girl, who makes her living as a florist—not a purely commercial enterprise, for she experiments and develops new varieties, and is quite wonderful; and that white rose is her own creation—it is becoming well known. She named it for me, and she sends me at least one every day—she says it's my royalty—if that's what you lawyers call that sort of thing."

"We lawyers rarely have anything so interesting as that to apply the word to! So that rose is the Barbara?" and it gave him a feeling of recklessness to find himself speaking her name aloud. "There are large conservatories on the estate, over there somewhere; I might risk the scarlet fever by attacking the gardener and demanding a Barbara for you."

"I'm afraid my little flower hasn't attained to the grandeur of Ardsley," she laughed. "But pray, where are we?"

They had reached the highroad much sooner than Griswold had expected, and he checked his horse abruptly, remembering that he was *persona non grata* on this soil.

"We must go back; I mustn't be seen here. The workmen are scattered all about the place, and they all know me."

"Oh, just a little farther! I want to see the towers of the castle!"

If she had asked him to jump into the sea he would not have hesitated; and he was so happy at being with her that his heart sang defiance to Ardmore and the splendors of Ardsley.

They were riding now toward the red bungalow, where he had often sprawled on the broad benches and chaffed with Ardmore for hours at a time. Tea was served here sometimes when there were guests at the house; and Griswold wondered just who were included in the party that his quondam friend was entertaining, and how Mrs. Atchison was progressing in her efforts to effect a match between Daisy Waters and her brother.

The drives were nearly all open to the public, so that by the letter of the law he was no intruder; but beyond the bungalow he must not go. Sobered by the thought

of his breach with Ardmore, he resolved not to pass the bungalow whose red roof was now in sight.

"It's like a fairy place, and I feel that there can be no end to it," Barbara was saying. "But it isn't kind to urge you in. We certainly are doing nothing to find Appleweight, and it must be nearly noon."

It was just then—he vividly recalls the moment—as Griswold felt in his waistcoat for his watch—that Miss Jerry Dangerfield, with Thomas Ardmore at her side, galloped into view. They were racing madly, like irresponsible children, and bore boisterously down upon the two pilgrims.

Jerry and Ardmore, hatless and warm, were pardonably indignant at thus being arrested in their flight, and the master of Ardsley, feeling for once the dignity of his proprietorship, broke out stormily.

"I would have you know—I would have you know—" he roared, and then his voice failed him. He stared; he spluttered; he busied himself with his horse, which was dancing in eagerness to resume the race. He quieted the beast, which nevertheless arched and pawed like a war-horse, and then the master of Ardsley bawled:

"Grissy! I say, Grissy!"

Miss Osborne and Professor Griswold, on their droop-

ing Mingo County nondescripts, made a tame picture before Ardmore and his fair companion on their Ardsley hunters. The daughter of the governor of South Carolina looked upon the daughter of the governor of North Carolina with high disdain, and it need hardly be said that this feeling, as expressed by glacial glances, was evenly reciprocal, and that in the contemptuous upward tilt of two charming chins the nicest judgment would have been necessary to any fair opinion as to which state had the better argument.

The associate professor of admiralty was known as a ready debater, and he quickly returned his former friend's salutation, and in much the contumelious tone he would have used in withering an adversary before a jury.

"Pardon me, but are you one of the employees here?"

"Why, Grissy, old man, don't look at me like that! How did you—"

"I owe your master an apology for riding upon his property at a time when pestilence is giving you cause for so much concern. The death-rate from scarlet fever is deplorably high—"

"Oh, Grissy!" cried Ardmore.

"You have addressed me familiarly, by a nickname

sometimes used by intimate friends, though I can't for the life of me recall you. I want you to know that I am here in an official capacity, on an errand for the state of South Carolina."

Miss Dangerfield's chin, which had dropped a trifle, pointed again into the blue ether.

"You will pardon me," she said, "but an agent of the state of South Carolina is far exceeding his powers when he intrudes upon North Carolina soil."

"The state of South Carolina does what it pleases and goes where it likes," declared Miss Barbara Osborne warmly, whereupon Mr. Ardmore, at a glance from his coadjutor, waxed righteously indignant.

"It's one thing, sir, for you to ride in here as a sightseer, but quite another for you to come representing an unfriendly state. You will please choose which view of the matter I shall take, and I shall act accordingly."

Griswold's companion spoke to him earnestly in a low tone for a moment, and then Griswold addressed Ardmore incisively.

"I don't know what you pretend to be, sir; but it may interest you to know that *I* am the governor of South Carolina!"

"And this gentleman," cried Jerry, pointing to Ard-

more with her riding-crop, "though his hair is mussed and his scarf visibly untied, is none other than the governor of North Carolina, and he is not only on his own property, but in the sovereign state of which he is the chief executive."

Professor Griswold lifted his hat with the least flourish.

"I congratulate the state of North Carolina on having reposed authority in hands so capable. If this young lady is correct, sir, I will serve official notice on you that I have reason to believe that a person named Appleweight, a fugitive from justice, is hiding on your property and in your state, and I now formally demand that you surrender him forthwith."

"If I may introduce myself," interposed Jerry, "I will say to you that my name is Geraldine Dangerfield, and that this Appleweight person is now at Mr. Ardmore's house."

"I suppose," replied Miss Osborne with gentle irony, "that he has the pink parlor and leads the conversation at table."

"You are quite mistaken," replied Ardmore; "but if it would afford you any satisfaction to see the outlaw you may look upon him in my wine cellar, where, only

an hour ago, I left him sitting on a case of Chateau Bizet '82. My further intentions touching this scoundrelly South Carolinian I need not now disclose; but I give you warning that the Appleweight issue will soon and forever be terminated and in a manner that will greatly redound to the credit and the glory of the Old North State."

Professor Griswold's hand went to his mustache with a gesture that smote Ardmore, for he knew that it hid that inscrutable smile that had always baffled him.

"I trust," said Griswold, "that the prisoner, whom we can not for a moment concede to be the real Appleweight, will not be exposed to scarlet fever, pending a settlement of this matter. It is my understanding that the Bizet '82 is a fraudulent vintage that has never been nearer France than Paris, Illinois, and if the prisoner in your cellar drinks of it I shall hold you officially responsible for the consequences. And now, I have the honor to bid you both good morning."

He and Barbara swung their horses round and retraced their way, leaving Ardmore and Jerry gazing after them.

When the shabby beasts from the stable at Turner Court House had borne Miss Osborne and Griswold out

of sight beyond the bungalow, Ardmore turned blankly to Jerry.

"Have I gone blind or anything? Unless I'm crazy that was dear old Grissy, but who is that girl?"

"That is Miss Barbara Osborne, and I hope she has learned such a lesson that she will not be snippy to me any more, if she *is* the president-general of the Daughters of the Seminole War."

"But where do you suppose she found Grissy?"

"I don't know, I'm sure; nor, Mr. Ardmore, do I care."

"He said he represented the state of South Carolina —do you suppose the governor has really employed him?"

"I do not," said Jerry emphatically; "for he appears intelligent, and intelligence is something that would never appeal to Governor Osborne. It is quite possible," mused Jerry aloud, "that Miss Osborne's father has disappeared like mine, and that she is running his office with Mr. Griswold's aid. If so, we shall probably have some fun before we get through with this."

"If that's true we shall have more than fun!" exclaimed Ardmore, thoroughly aroused. "You don't know Grissy. He's the smartest man alive, and if he's

running this Appleweight case for Governor Osborne, he'll keep us guessing. Why did I ever send him that scarlet fever telegram, anyhow? He'll fight harder than ever for that and all I wanted was to keep him away until we had got all through with this business here so I could show him what a great man I had been and how I had been equal to an opportunity when it offered."

"I wish you to remember, Mr. Ardmore, that you still have *your* opportunity, and that I expect you to carry this matter through to a safe conclusion and to the honor of the Old North State."

"I have no intention of failing, Miss Dangerfield;" and with this they turned and rode slowly back toward the house.

Professor Griswold and Miss Osborne were silent until the forest again shut them in.

Then, in a sequestered spot, Griswold suddenly threw up his head and laughed long and loud.

"It doesn't strike me as being so amusing," remarked Miss Osborne. "They have Appleweight in their wine cellar and I don't see for the life of me how we are going to get him out."

"What's funny, Miss Osborne, is Ardy—that he and I should be pitted against each other in a thing of this

kind is too utterly ridiculous. Ardy acting as governor of North Carolina beats anything that ever happened on this continent. But how do you suppose he ever met Miss Dangerfield, who certainly is a self-contained young woman?"

"The answer to that riddle is so simple," replied Miss Osborne, "that I am amazed that you fail to see it for yourself. Miss Dangerfield is undoubtedly the girl with the winking eye."

"Oh, no!" protested Griswold.

"I don't hesitate to announce that as a fact. Miss Geraldine Dangerfield, beyond any question, is the young lady whom Mr. Ardmore, your knight errant friend, went forth for to seek. Just how they met we shall perhaps learn later on. But just now it seems rather necessary for us to adopt some plan of action, unless you feel that you do not wish to oppose your friend."

"Oppose him! I have got to whip him to the dust if I shake down the very towers of his stronghold! It's well we have the militia on the road. With the state army at our back we can show Tommy Ardmore a few things in state administration that are not dreamed of in his philosophy."

"Do you suppose they really have Appleweight?" asked Barbara.

"Not for a minute! They told us that story merely to annoy us when they found what we were looking for. That touch about the wine cellar is characteristically Ardmoresque. If they had Appleweight you may be sure they wouldn't keep him on the premises."

Whereupon, they rode back to Turner Court House much faster than they had come.

CHAPTER XV

THE PRISONER IN THE CORN-CRIB

Jerry and Ardmore sat at a long table in the commodious Ardsley library, which was a modification of a Gothic chapel. It was on the upper floor, with broad windows that had the effect of bringing the landscape indoors, and the North Carolina sky is, we must concede, a pleasant thing to have at one's elbow. A large accumulation of mail from the governor's office at Raleigh had been forwarded, and Jerry insisted that it must be opened and disposed of in some way. Governor Dangerfield was, it appeared, a subscriber to a clipping bureau, and they had been examining critically a batch of cuttings relating to the New Orleans incident. Most of them were in a frivolous key, playfully reviving the ancient query as to what the governor of North Carolina really said to the governor of South Carolina. Others sought causes for the widely-reported disappearance of the two governors; and still other reports boldly maintained that Governors Dangerfield and Osborne were at

their capitals engaged in the duties of their respective offices.

"It's a good thing we got hold of Collins," observed Ardmore, putting down a clipping from a New York paper in which the reports of Governor Dangerfield's disappearance were analyzed and tersely dismissed; "for he knows how to write and he's done a splendid picture of your father on his throne attending to business; and his little stingers for Osborne are the work of genius."

"There's a certain finish about Mr. Collins' lying that is refreshing," replied Jerry, "and I can not help thinking that he has a brilliant future before him if he enters politics. Nothing pains me more than a careless, ill-considered, silly lie, which is the best that most people can do. But it would be very interesting to know whether Governor Osborne has really disappeared, or just how your friend the Virginia professor has seized the reins of state. Do you suppose he got a jug from somewhere, and met Miss Osborne and—"

"Do you think—do you think—she may have—er possibly—closed one eye in his direction?" asked Ardmore dubiously.

"Mr. Ardmore"—and Jerry pointed at him with a

bronze paper-cutter to make sure of his attention—"Mr. Ardmore, if you ever imply again by act, word or deed that I winked at you I shall never, never speak to you again. I should think that a man with a nice sister like Mrs. Atchison would have a better opinion of women than you seem to have. I never saw you until you came to my father's house to tell me about the jug—and you know I didn't. And as for that Barbara Osborne, while I don't doubt that even in South Carolina a Daughter of the Seminole War might wink at a gentleman in a moment of extreme provocation, I doubt if she did, for she lacks animation, and has no more soul than a gum overshoe."

The obvious inconsistency of this pronouncement caused Ardmore to frown in the stress of his thought; and he stared helplessly along the line of the accusing paper-cutter into Jerry's eyes.

"Oh, cheer up!" she cried in her despair of him; "and forget it, forget it, forget it! I'll say this to you, Mr. Ardmore, that if I ever winked at you—and I never, never did—I'm sorry I did it! Some time when you haven't so much work on your hands as you have this morning just think that over and let me know where you land. And now, look at these things, please."

"What is all this stuff?" he demanded, as she tossed him a pile of papers.

"They refer to the application for pardon of a poor man who's going to be hanged for murder to-morrow unless we do something for him; and he has a wife and three little children, and he has never committed any other crime but to break into a smoke-house and steal a side of bacon."

"Did he shoot in self-defense, or how was it?" asked Ardmore judicially.

"He killed a painless dentist who pulled the wrong tooth," answered Jerry, referring to the papers.

"If that's all I don't think we can stand for hanging him. I read a piece against capital punishment in a magazine once and the arguments were very strong. The killing of a dentist should not be a crime anyhow, and if you know how to pardon a man, why let's do it; but we'd better wait until the last minute, and then send a telegram to the sheriff to stop the proceedings just before he pulls the string, which makes it most impressive, and gives a better effect."

"I believe you are right about it," said Jerry. "There's an old pardon right here in this bundle which we can use. It was made out for another man who stole a horse that

afterwards died, which papa said was a mitigating circumstance; but the week before his execution the man escaped from jail before papa could pardon him."

"Suppose we don't let them hang anybody while we're running the state," suggested Ardmore; "it's almost as though you murdered a man yourself, and I couldn't tie my neckties afterwards without a guilty feeling. I can't imagine anything more disagreeable than to be hanged. I heard all of *Tristan und Isolde* once, and I have seen half an Ibsen play, and those were hard things to bear, but I suppose hanging would be just as painful and there would be no supper afterwards to cheer you up."

"You shouldn't speak in that tone of *Afterwards,* Mr. Ardmore," said Jerry severely. "It isn't religious. And while we're on the subject of religion, may I ask the really, truly wherefore of Miss Daisy Waters' sudden return to Newport?" and Jerry's tone and manner were carelessly demure.

"She went home," replied Ardmore, grinning; "she left Ardsley for two reasons, one of which she stated at the breakfast table and the other she handed me privately."

"She said at the breakfast table that she was called

home by incipient whooping cough in the household of her brother-in-law's cousin's family."

"As she has no brother-in-law, that can not be true. What she said to me privately was that the house party had grown very much larger than Mrs. Atchison had originally planned it, and that I am so busy that so many guests must be a burden."

Jerry stroked her cheek reflectively.

"I thought Miss Waters wouldn't last long after I asked her if rusty nail water really would remove freckles. My own freckles are exactly seven in number and I am not ashamed of them, but Miss Waters seemed very sensitive on the subject, though I thought her freckles useful in diverting attention from her drug-store hair."

"Did you say seven?" inquired Ardmore, gazing eagerly into Jerry's face. "I make it only six, and there's one away over there under your left eye that seems very lonesome, as though it suffered keenly from being so far away from its brothers and sisters on the other side of your nose."

"Mr. Ardmore"—and Jerry again indicated the person addressed by pointing with the paper-cutter—"Mr. Ardmore, it is downright impudent of you to talk to me

about my appearance in any terms, but when you speak of my face as though it were a map in a geography and of my freckles as though they were county seats, or lakes, or strange places in China, then I must protest with all my strength. If you don't change the subject immediately I shall refuse to pardon this person who killed the painless dentist, and he shall be hanged by the neck till he be dead; and you, Mr. Thomas Ardmore, will be guilty of his murder."

The discussion of Miss Jerry Dangerfield's freckles ceased abruptly on the appearance of Big Paul, the forester.

"A body of South Carolina militia is marching across country from the south. One of my men heard of it down at Turner Court House last night and rode to where the troops were encamped. He learned that it was a practice march for the militia. There's several companies of infantry, so he reports, and a piece of artillery."

"Bully for old Grissy!" exclaimed Ardmore. "They're coming this way, are they, Paul?" And the three bent over the map.

"That is the place, sir. They seem to be planning to get around Turner's without stirring up the town. But

it would take a good deal to wake up Turner's," laughed the big German.

Jerry placed her finger on the state line.

"If they dare cross that—if they as much as dare!"

"If they dare we shall show them a few things. Take all the men you need, Paul, to watch their movements. That will do."

The forester lingered.

"You remember that we spoke the other day of the log house on Raccoon Creek, where the Appleweights had driven off our man?"

"Yes, Paul. It is where the state line crosses the heavy woods and the farthest outpost, so to speak, on my property. When you cross the little creek, you're in South Carolina. You said some of these Appleweight fellows had been cutting off the timber down there, if I remember rightly."

"Yes, sir," replied the forester, twirling his cap awkwardly. "But some of the people on the estate have said—"

He broke off in an embarrassment so unlike him that Jerry and Ardmore looked at him curiously.

"Well, Paul, what's the matter? If the cabin has been burned down it's no serious matter."

"Why, sir; some of the men passing there at night say they see lights and hear sounds in the cabin, though no one from the estate goes there. A child died in the house last spring and—well, you know how some of these people are!"

"Ghosts!" cried Ardmore. "The property is growing more valuable all the time! Tell them that whoever captures the ghost and brings it here shall have a handsome present. So far it's only a light in an abandoned house—is that it?"

"Well, they say it's very strange," and it was clear that the German was not wholly satisfied to have his employer laugh off the story.

"Cheer up, Paul. We have bigger business on hand than the chasing of ghosts just now. When we get through with these other things I'll go over there myself and take a look at the spook."

As Paul hurried away, Jerry seized a pen and wrote this message:

Rutherford Gillingwater,
Adjutant-General, Camp Dangerfield,
Azbell, N. C.:

Move all available troops by shortest route to Kildare at once and report to me personally at Ardsley. Make no statements to newspapers. Answer.

DANGERFIELD,
Governor.

"I guess that will bring him running," said Ardmore, calling a servant and ordering the message despatched immediately. "But when he comes, expecting to report to the governor and finds that he isn't here, what do you suppose he will do?"

"Mr. Ardmore," began Jerry, in the tone of sweet tolerance with which one arraigns a hopeless child, "Mr. Ardmore, there are times when you tax my patience severely. You don't seem to grasp the idea that we are not making explanations to inferiors in our administration. Colonel Gillingwater will undoubtedly be a good deal surprised to get that message, but when the first shock is over he will obey the orders of his commander-in-chief. And the fact that he is ordered to report to Ardsley will not be lost on him, for he will see in that a possible social opportunity, and a chance to wear some of his uniforms that he has never worn before. He will think that papa is really here to test the efficiency of the troops, and that as papa is a guest at Ardsley, which we know he isn't, there will probably be some great social functions in this house, with papa's staff dressed up and all shiny in gold braid. Since Rutherford Gillingwater had the typhoid fever during the Spanish War I have not been sure that he is as much

interested in fighting as he is in the purely circus work of being a soldier. I just now recall that when papa was about to order out the troops to stop a railroad strike last spring, Rutherford Gillingwater went to all the trouble of having tonsilitis and was so ill that he could hardly leave his room even after the strike had been settled by arbitration. If he knew that there was likely to be a terrible battle over here instead of nice long dinners and toasts to "The Old North State," "Our Governor," and "The Governor's Daughter," his old wounds, that he never had, might trouble him so that they'd have to wrap him up in cotton and carry him home."

Before luncheon a message was received from Gillingwater, to this effect:

Governor William Dangerfield,
Ardsley, N. C.:

En route with our entire available force in the field. I am riding ahead with all speed, and will report at Ardsley at nine o'clock. Is full military dress *de rigueur?*

GILLINGWATER, Adjutant-General.

"Isn't that just like Rutherford! He's afraid he won't be dressy enough; but if he knew that the South Carolina troops might shoot holes in his uniform he

wouldn't be due here for a couple of weeks, instead of at nine o'clock to-night;" and Jerry laughed merrily.

They debated more seriously this telegram from Collins at Raleigh sent the previous evening:

Can't maintain this bluff much longer. Even the friendly newspapers are growing suspicious. State credit jeopardized by disappearance of Treasurer Foster. Billings, of Bronx Loan and Trust, here in a great fury over bond matter. Do you know governor's whereabouts?

"Things are certainly growing more exciting," was Ardmore's comment. "I suppose even a gifted liar like Collins can't muzzle the press forever."

"You can't go on fooling all North Carolina all the time, either," said Jerry, "and I suppose when papa gets tired of being scared he will turn up in Raleigh and tell some plausible story about where he has been and what has happened. When it comes to being plausible no one can touch papa."

"Maybe he's dead," suggested Ardmore gloomily.

"That's a real inspiration on your part, Mr. Ardmore; and it's very sweet of you to mention it, but I have no idea that any harm has come to papa. It's too much trouble to get elected governor, without dying in office, and besides, papa is none too friendly with the lieutenant-governor and would never think of allowing such a

person to succeed him. But those bonds seem rather serious and I don't like the idea of your Mr. Billings making a fuss at Raleigh."

"That will be all right," remarked Ardmore, blotting the last of a number of telegrams which he had been writing, and pressing a button. "It's much more important for us to get Appleweight into a South Carolina jail; and it's not going to be so easy to do, now that Grissy is working on the other side, and angry at me about that scarlet fever telegram."

"There may be trouble," said Ardmore to his guests as they sat at luncheon. "But I should hate to have it said that my guests could not be taken care of here perfectly. I beg that you will all remain."

"If there's to be a row, why don't you call the police and be done with it?" asked a sad young member of the company. His motor number had so often figured in reports of speed law violations that he was known as Eighteen Eighty. "I thought you came down here for quiet and not to get into trouble, Ardy."

"If I miss my steamer nine days from to-day, and meanwhile have to eat horse meat, just as they did in the siege of Paris, I shall be greatly provoked, to say the least," remarked Mrs. Atchison pleasantly; for her

brother's amazing awakening delighted her and it was a cheering experience that he promised, of civil war, battle, murder and sudden death.

"I think I shall spend more time in America after this," remarked Eighteen Eighty. "I did not know that amusing things ever happened over here. What did you say the name of this state is?"

"The name of this state," replied Miss Dangerfield, "is North Carolina, and I have my opinion of any native American who runs around Europe all the time, and who can visit a place in this country without even knowing the name of the state he is in."

"But there's really no difference between North and South Carolina, is there?" persisted Eighteen Eighty.

Jerry put down her fork, and folded her hands beside her plate, while she addressed the offender.

"Mr. Number Something, the difference between the Old North State and South Carolina is not merely geographical—it is also intellectual, ethical and spiritual. But may I ask you whether you know of which state you are a citizen?"

A laugh rose as the sad young man flushed and looked inquiringly about.

"I voted you in my precinct that time I ran for alder-

man in New York," said Ardmore, "but that's no sign you had a right to vote there. I shot Ballywinkle through the booth at the same time. I was a reform candidate and needed votes, but I hoped Bally would get arrested and be sent to jail. My impression is that you are really a citizen of Rhode Island, which is where Newport is."

The debate as to Eighteen Eighty's legal residence was interrupted by the arrival of a summons for Ardmore, who hurriedly left the table.

Big Paul awaited him below, mounted and holding a led-horse.

"There's a line of the South Carolina militia crawling through the woods toward Raccoon Creek. They insist that it's a practice skirmish and that they've come over here because the landscape is naturally adapted to their purposes."

"It's awfully nice of them to like my scenery. You'd better send your best man out to meet Colonel Gillingwater of the North Carolina militia, and tell him to march all his troops into the estate by the north gates, and to be in a hurry. Tell him—tell him Governor Dangerfield is anxious to have the staff present in full uniform at a grand ball at Ardsley to-night."

Ardmore rode off alone toward Raccoon Creek to catch a view of the enemy. How far would Griswold go? This question he kept debating with himself. His late friend was a lawyer and a serious one whom he had not believed capable of seizing the militia of one state and using it to make a military demonstration against another. Ardmore could go as far as Griswold; yet he was puzzled to know why Griswold was in the field at all. Miss Dangerfield's suggestion that Griswold's interest in the daughter of the governor of South Carolina accounted for his presence on the border seemed plausible at first; and yet the more he thought about it the less credible it seemed, for he was sure that Griswold had talked to him about women with the frankness that had characterized all their intercourse, and Ardmore racked his brains in his effort to recall the few affairs to which the associate professor of admiralty had pleaded guilty. Memory brought these back to him slowly. There was an Old Point Comfort affair, dating back to Griswold's student days, and to which he had referred with no little feeling once or twice; and there was a York Harbor affair, that came a little later; and there was the girl he had met on a steamer, about whom Griswold had shown sensitiveness when Ardmore had made bold to twit him.

But Ardmore could not account for Miss Osborne, unless his friend had been withholding his confidence while seemingly wholly frank; and the thought that this must be true widened the breach between them. And when he was saying to himself that the daughters of governors are not in the habit of picking up cavaliers and intrusting state affairs to them and that it was almost inconceivable that the conscientious Griswold, at the busiest season at the university, should have taken employment from the governor of South Carolina, he found that he had struck a stone wall, and he confessed to himself that the situation was beyond him.

These reflections carried him far toward Raccoon Creek, and when he had reached that tortuous stream he dismounted and tied his horse, the more freely to examine the frontier. The Raccoon is never more than eighty feet wide, but filled with boulders round which the water foams in many curves and splashes, running away in the merriest ripples, so that it is never wholly tranquil. By jumping from boulder to boulder he crossed the turbulent tide and gained the other side with a sense of entering the enemy's country.

"Now," he muttered, "I am in South Carolina."

He drew out his map and held it against a tree the

better to study it, reassuring himself that his own property line embraced several sections of the forest on the south side of the state boundary.

"If Grissy shoots me, it will be on my own land," he said aloud.

He cautiously followed the stream until, several hundred yards farther on, and overhanging the creek, he came upon the log cabin in which big Paul had reported the presence of a ghost. Paul's story had not interested him particularly, but now that he was in the neighborhood he resolved to visit the cabin and learn if possible how ghosts amuse themselves by day. He had thrust a revolver into his pocket before leaving the house and while he had no idea that ghosts may be shot, he now made sure that the weapon was in good order. As he sat on a log slipping the cylinder through his fingers he heard whistling farther along the creek, followed quickly by the snapping of twigs under a heavy tread, and a moment later a tall, slender man broke into view.

The stranger was dressed like a countryman, but he was unmistakably not of the Ardsley force of workmen, for these wore a rough sort of uniform. His hands were thrust carelessly into the side pockets of a gray jeans coat. They were thrust in deep, so that the coat sagged

at the pockets. His trousers were turned up from a pair of rough shoes and he wore a gray flannel shirt, the collar of which was guiltless of a tie. He was smooth shaven, and carried in his mouth a short pipe, which he paused to relight when about a dozen yards from Ardmore. Then, as he held the lighted match above the pipe bowl for an instant to make sure his tobacco was burning, Ardmore jumped up and covered him with the pistol.

"I beg your pardon," said the master of Ardsley, "but you're my prisoner!"

The stranger shook the flame out of the match-stick carefully and threw it away before turning toward his captor.

"Young man," he said with perfect self-possession, "don't fool with that gun; it might go off."

His drawl was characteristic of the region; his tone was one of amused tolerance. Ardmore was short of stature, and his knickerbockers, leggings and Norfolk jacket were not wholly consonant with the revolver, which, however, he leveled very steadily at the stranger's head.

"You are an intruder on my property," said the master of Ardsley, "and unless I'm much mistaken you have

been playing ghost in that cabin. I've heard about you. Your gang has been cutting off my timber about long enough, and this game of playing ghost to scare my men won't do."

"Stealing your timber?" And the stranger was clearly surprised. He held his pipe in his hand with his thumb over the bowl and seemed to take a more serious interest in his captor.

"And now," continued Ardmore, "I'm about tired of having this end of the country run by the Appleweights, and their disreputable gang, so I'm going to lock you up."

The stranger turned toward the cabin, one corner of which was plainly visible, and shrugged his shoulders.

"I have nothing to do with the Appleweights, and I assure you I am not a timber thief."

"Then you must be the one who has lifted a few steers out of my herd. It makes no difference just what branch of the business you are engaged in, for we're picking up all the gang and you've got to come along with me."

The captive showed signs of anger for the first time. His face flushed, and he took a step toward Ardmore,

who immediately threw up the revolver so that it pointed at the man's head.

"Stop right there! We've got old man Appleweight, so you've lost your leader, and I tell you the jig's up. We'll have you all in jail before another twenty-four hours has passed."

"I judge from the tone of your remarks that you are Ardmore, the owner of Ardsley. Am I right?"

"You are quite right. And you are a member of a disreputable gang of outlaws that has been bringing shame upon the state of North Carolina. Now, I want you to march straight ahead of me. Step lively now!" And Ardmore flourished the pistol menacingly. "March!"

The man hesitated, flung up his head defiantly, then moved slowly forward. The flush in his face had deepened and his eyes flashed angrily; but Ardmore, his cap on the back of his head, himself presented a figure so severe, so eloquent of righteous indignation, that the stranger tamely obeyed him.

"We will cross the creek right here," he ordered; "it's a pretty jump there from that boulder—there, that was bully! Now right along there over the log—see the trail! Good!"

It was warm and the captive was perspiring freely. He moved along docilely, and finding that he manifested no inclination to bolt, Ardmore dropped the revolver to his side, but with his finger on the trigger. He was very proud of himself; for while to Miss Jerry Dangerfield undoubtedly belonged the honor of capturing the thief Appleweight, yet he had single-handed arrested a member of the famous gang, and he had already resolved upon a convenient method of disposing of his prisoner. They paused while Ardmore mounted his horse, silencing the captive, who took the opportunity to break out protestingly against what he termed an infamous outrage upon personal liberty.

"You've taken me from one state into another without due process of law," declared the stranger, thinking to impress Ardmore, as that young gentleman settled himself in his saddle.

"Go right on now; that's a good fellow," replied the master of Ardsley, lifting the revolver warningly. "Whether it's North Carolina or South Dakota—it doesn't make a particle of difference to me. As I remarked before, it's my property, I tell you, and I do what I please here."

"I'll show you whether you do or not," snorted the

prisoner, who was trudging along doggedly with the nose of Ardmore's horse occasionally poking his back.

They soon reached a field where some laborers were at work, and Ardmore called them to him for instructions.

"Boys, this is one of the timber thieves; put him in that corn-crib until I come back for him. The nights are warm; the sky is perfectly clear; and you will kindly see that he does not lack for food."

Two of the men jumped forward and seized Ardmore's prisoner, who now broke forth in a torrent of wrath, struggling vigorously in the hands of the sturdy fellows who had laid violent hands on him.

"That's right, boys; that's right; easy there! Now in he goes."

A series of corn-cribs fringed the field, and into one of these, from which half the corn had been removed, the prisoner was thrust sprawling upon the yellow ears, and when he rose and flung himself round, the door of the corn-crib slammed in his face. He bellowed with rage now, seeing that his imprisonment was a serious matter, and that it seemed likely to be prolonged indefinitely.

"They always told me you were a fool," he howled,

"but I didn't know that anything as crazy as you are was loose in the world."

"Thank you. The head of your gang is much more polite. He's sitting on his case of Chateau Bizet in my wine cellar, playing solitaire."

"Appleweight in your wine cellar!" bawled the captive in astonishment.

"Certainly. I was afraid to lock him in a room with bath for fear it might give him hydrophobia; but he's perfectly content in the wine cellar."

"What are you going to do with him?"

"I haven't decided yet just what to do with him, but the scoundrel undoubtedly belongs in South Carolina, and I have every intention of making his own state punish him."

The prisoner leaned heavily against his prison door and glared out upon his jailer with a new, fierce interest.

"I tell you I've nothing to do with the Appleweights! I don't want to reveal my identity to you, you young beggar; but I demand my legal rights."

"My dear sir," retorted Ardmore, "you have no legal rights, for the writ of habeas corpus doesn't go here.

You seem rather intelligent for a barn burner and timber thief. Come now, what is your name?"

The prisoner gazed down upon the imperturbable figure of his captor through the slats of the corn-crib. Ardmore returned his gaze with his most bland and child-like air. Many people had been driven to the point of madness by Ardmore's apparent dullness. The prisoner realized that he must launch a thunderbolt if he would disturb a self-possession so complete—a tranquillity as sweet as the fading afternoon.

"Mr. Ardmore, I dislike to do it, but your amazing conduct makes it necessary for me to disclose my identity," and the man's manner showed real embarrassment.

"I knew it; I knew it;" nodded Ardmore, folding his arms across his chest. "You're either the King of Siam or the Prince of Petosky. As either, I salute you!"

"No!" roared the captive, beating impotently against the door of the cage with his hands. "No! I'm the governor of South Carolina!"

This statement failed, however, to produce the slightest effect on Mr. Ardmore, who only smiled slightly, a smile less incredulous than disdainful.

"Oh, pshaw! that's nothing," he replied; *"I'm* the governor of North Carolina!" and mounting his horse

he gravely lifted his hat to the prisoner and galloped away.

While Mr. Ardmore was securing his prisoner in the corn-crib it may be interesting to return for a moment to the haunted log cabin on Raccoon Creek, the interior of which was roughly but comfortably furnished. Above were two small sleeping-rooms, and beside the bed in each stood a suit-case and a hand-satchel. In each room hung, on convenient hooks, a long, black frock-coat, a pair of trousers of light cloth, and a broad-brim black felt hat. Coat, trousers and hat were exactly alike.

In the room below sat a man in his shirt-sleeves, his feet on a cheap deal table, blowing rings from a cigar. He presented a picture of the greatest ease and contentment, as he occasionally stroked his short brown beard, or threw up his arms and clasped his hands about his head or caught lazily at the smoke rings. On the table lay an array of playing cards and poker chips.

"It's too good to last forever," the lone occupant reflected aloud, stifling a yawn, and he reached out, with careless indifference, toward a bundle of newspapers tied together with a piece of twine and drew one out and spread it across his knees. He yawned again as though the thought of a world whose affairs were

stamped in printer's ink bored him immensely; and then the bold head-lines that shouted at him across half a quarter of the sheet caused him to gasp, and his feet struck the bare floor of the cabin resoundingly. He now bent over the paper with the greatest eagerness, muttering as he read, and some of his mutterings were, it must be confessed, not without profane embellishment.

TWO COWARDLY GOVERNORS MISSING
SCANDAL AFFECTING TWO STATE EXECUTIVES
IS THE APPLEWEIGHT CASE RESPONSIBLE?
RUMORS OF FATAL DUEL ON STATE LINE

He read breathlessly the startling story that followed the head-lines, then rose and glanced anxiously at his watch.

"Am I drunk or mad? I must find Osborne and get out of this."

He leaped to the open door, and gazed into the forest from a little platform that commanded all sides of the cabin. And there, to his utter amazement, he saw men in khaki emerging cautiously from the woods. They were unmistakably soldiers of some sort, for an officer was giving sharp commands, and the line opened out like a fan along the creek. The observer of this maneu-

ver mopped his head with his handkerchief as he watched the alert movements of the figures in khaki.

He was so absorbed that he failed to hear stealthy steps at the rear of the platform, but he was now rudely aroused by two uniformed youngsters with S. C. N. G. on their caps, who sprang upon him and bore him with a crash to the puncheon floor.

"You're our prisoner!" shouted one of them, rising when he found that the prisoner yielded without resistance.

"What for?" blurted the captive, sitting up and rubbing his elbow.

"For being Bill Appleweight, *alias* Poteet. Get up, now, and come with us to headquarters, or my instructions are to break your head."

"Who in the devil are you?" panted the prisoner.

"Well, if it's anything to you, we're the South Carolina militia, so you'd better get up and climb."

CHAPTER XVI

THE FLIGHT OF GILLINGWATER

"It will be better for me to break the news to Colonel Gillingwater," said Jerry, "and you must go out and meet the troops yourself, with Mr. Cooke and that amusing Mr. Collins. There is no telling what effect my tidings will have on Rutherford, or what he will decide to do. He has never before been so near trouble as he is now, and I may have to give him first aid to the injured when he finds out that the South Carolina troops are on Raccoon Creek, all ready to march upon our sacred soil."

"But suppose your adjutant-general shouldn't go back to his troops after he sees you, then what am I to do?"

"If you don't see him by ten o'clock you will take personal command and exercise your own discretion as to the best method of landing Appleweight in a South Carolina jail. After that we must find papa, and it will be up to him to satisfy the newspapers and his constituents with some excuse for his strange disappearance."

Collins had come from Raleigh on the evening train,

and he had solemnly assured Ardmore that the present state of affairs could not be maintained another twenty-four hours. He had exhausted his professional resources, and the North Carolina newspapers of all shades of opinion were clamoring for the truth, and were insisting that, for the honor and dignity of the state, Governor Dangerfield should show himself in Raleigh. Even the metropolitan press, which Collins had filled for several days with blithe stories of the administration's vigorous policy in the Appleweight case, had refused further matter from him.

"We've got to find Dangerfield or bust. Now, where is that eminent statesman, Ardmore? You can't tell me you don't know; but if you don't, Miss Dangerfield does, and she's got to tell."

"She hasn't the slightest idea, but if the newspapers find out that he's really and truly missing, he will have to show up; but first we've got to take Appleweight off that case of Chateau Bizet and lodge him in the jail at Turner Court House, and let Governor Osborne have the odium of incarcerating the big chief of the border, to whom he is under the greatest political obligations."

"But it's all over the country now that Osborne hasn't been seen in Columbia since he and Dangerfield had that

row in New Orleans. Cranks are turning up everywhere, pretending to be governors of various states, and old Dangerfield is seen on all the outgoing steamers. There's been nothing like it since the kidnapping of Charley Ross."

Ardmore drew on his riding-gloves reflectively, and a delighted grin illuminated his countenance.

"I caught a lunatic down on the Raccoon this afternoon who said *he* was the governor of South Carolina, and I locked him up."

"Well, he may be Osborne," remarked Collins, with journalistic suspicion.

"And he may be a Swiss admiral or the king of Mars. I guess I'm a governor myself, and I know what a governor looks like and acts like—you can't fool me. I put this impostor where he'll have a chance to study astronomy to-night."

"Then he isn't on that case of Chateau Bizet with Appleweight?"

"No; I locked him up in a corn-crib until I get time to study his credentials. Come along now!"

Ardmore, Collins and Cooke rode rapidly away through the wide gates of the estate along the Sapphire road, over which, by his last bulletin, the adjutant-

general of North Carolina was marching his troops. They had left Cooke's men with Paul's foresters to guard the house and to picket the banks of the Raccoon in the immediate neighborhood of the camp of the South Carolinians.

"I guess those fellows can hold 'em till morning," said Cooke. "We've got to clean up the whole business by to-morrow night. You can't have two states at war with each other this way without shaking up the universe, and if federal troops come down here to straighten things out it won't be funny."

They had ridden about a mile, when Cooke checked his horse with an exclamation.

"There's somebody coming like the devil was after him. It must be Gillingwater."

They drew rein and waited, the quick patter of hoofs ringing out sharply in the still night. The moonlight gave them a fair sweep of the road, and they at once saw a horseman galloping rapidly toward them.

"Lordy, the man's on fire!" gasped Ardmore.

"By George, you're right!" muttered Collins, moving nervously in his saddle. "It's a human sunburst."

"It's only his gold braid," explained the practical Cooke.

"He must have on solid gold armor, then," declared Collins.

Seeing three men drawn across the road, the horseman began to check his flight.

"Men!" he shouted, as his horse pawed the air with its forefeet, "is this the road to Ardsley?"

"Right you are," yelled Cooke, and they were aware of a flash, a glitter that startled and dazzled the eye, and Colonel Rutherford Gillingwater thundered on.

Ardmore looked at his watch.

"He's undoubtedly a man of action, if I ever saw one; and I think we are to be congratulated on having so gallant a commander for our troops," said the master of Ardsley; but the sight of Rutherford Gillingwater had filled his soul with jealous forebodings. He had heard that women are prone to fall in worship before warriors in their battle armor, and he was sure that Jerry Dangerfield was a girl of infinitely kind heart, who might not, when face to face with the issue, subject the man she had engaged to marry to any severe test.

They rode on, however, and saw presently the lights of camp-fires, and a little later were ceremoniously halted at the roadside by an armed guard.

It had been arranged that Collins, who had once been

a second lieutenant in the Georgia militia, should be presented as an officer of the regular army, detailed as special aide to Governor Dangerfield during the encampment, and that in case Gillingwater failed to return promptly he should take command of the North Carolina forces.

An open field had been seized for the night's camp, and the tents already shone white in the moonlight. The three men introduced themselves to the militia officers, and Collins expressed their regret that they had missed the adjutant-general.

"Governor Dangerfield wished you to move your force on to Ardsley should we fail to meet Colonel Gillingwater; and you had better strike your tents and be in readiness to advance in case he doesn't personally return with orders."

Captain Collins, as he had designated himself, apologized for not being in uniform.

"I lost my baggage train," he laughed, "and Governor Dangerfield is so anxious not to miss this opportunity to settle the Appleweight case that I hurried out to meet you with these gentlemen."

"Appleweight!" exclaimed the group of officers in amazement.

"None other than the great Appleweight!" responded Collins. "The governor has him in his own hands at last, and is going to carry him across the border and into a South Carolina bastile, as a little pleasantry on the governor of South Carolina."

"He's had a sudden change of heart if he's captured Appleweight," remarked a major incredulously. "His policy has always been to let old Bill alone."

"It's only a ripple of the general reform wave that's sweeping the country," suggested Ardmore cheerfully. "Turn the rascals out; put the rascals in; keep the people hopeful and the jails full. That's the Dangerfield watchword."

"Well, I guess Dangerfield knows how to drive the hearse if there's got to be a funeral," observed the quartermaster. "The governor's not a man to ride inside if he can find another corpse."

And they all laughed and accepted the situation as promising better diversion than they had expected from the summer maneuvers.

The militia officers gave the necessary orders for breaking the half-formed camp, and then turned their attention to the entertainment of their guests. Ardmore kept track of the time, and promptly at ten o'clock

Collins rose from the log by the roadside where they had been sitting.

"We must obey the governor's orders, gentlemen," said Collins courteously, "and march at once to Ardsley. I, you understand, am only a courier, and your guest for the present."

"If you please," asked Cooke, when the line had begun to move forward, "what is that wagon over there?"

He pointed to a mule team hitched to a quartermaster's wagon that a negro was driving into position across the rough field. It was piled high with luggage, a pyramid that rose black against the heavens. One of the militia officers, evidently greatly annoyed, bawled to the driver to get back out of the way.

"Pardon me," said Collins politely, "but is that your personal baggage, gentlemen?"

"That belongs to Colonel Gillingwater," remarked the quartermaster. "The rest of us have a suit-case apiece."

"Do you mean," demanded Ardmore, "that the adjutant-general carries all that luggage for himself?"

"That is exactly it! But," continued the quartermaster loyally, "you never can tell what will happen when you take the field this way, and our chief is not a man to forget any of the details of military life."

"In Washington we all think very highly of Colonel Gillingwater," remarked Collins, with noble condescension, "and in case we should become involved in war he would undoubtedly be called to high rank in the regular establishment."

"It's too bad," said Cooke, as the three drew aside and waited for a battery of light artillery to rumble into place behind the infantry, "it's too bad, Collins, that it didn't occur to you to impersonate the president of the French Republic or Emperor William. You'll be my death before we finish this job."

"This won't be so funny when Dangerfield gets hold of us," grinned the reporter. "We'd better cheer up all we can now. We're playing with the state of North Carolina as though it were a bean-bag. But what's that over there?"

The pyramidal baggage wagon had gained the road behind them, and lingered uncertainly, with the driver asleep and waiting for orders. The conspirators were about to gallop forward to the head of the moving column, when Collins pointed across the abandoned campground to where a horseman, who had evidently made a wide detour of the advancing column, rode madly toward the baggage wagon.

"The gentleman's trying to kill his horse, I should judge," murmured Ardmore. "By Jove!"

"It's Gillingwater!" chorused the trio.

The rider in his haste had overlooked the men in the road. He dashed through the wide opening in the fence, left by the militiamen, took the ditch by the roadside at a leap, wakened the sleeping driver on the wagon with a roar, and himself leaped upon the box and began turning the horses.

"What do you think he's doing?" asked Cooke.

"He's in a hurry to get back to mother's cooking," replied Ardmore. "He's seen Miss Dangerfield and learned that war is at hand, and he's going to get his clothes out of danger. Lordy! Listen to him slashing the mules!"

"But you don't think—"

The wagon had swung round, and already was in rapid flight. Collins howled in glee.

"Come on! We can't miss a show like this!"

"Leave the horses then! There's a hill there that will break his neck. We'd better stop him if we can!" cried Cooke, dismounting.

They threw their reins to the driver of the wagon, who had been brushed from his seat by the impatient

adjutant-general, and was chanting weirdly to himself at the roadside.

The wagon, piled high with trunks and boxes, was dashing forward, Gillingwater belaboring the mules furiously, and, hearing the shouts of strange pursuers, yelling at the team in a voice shrill with fear.

"Come on, boys!" shouted Ardmore, thoroughly aroused, "catch the spy and traitor!"

The road dipped down into the shadow of a deep cut, where the moon's dim rays but feebly penetrated, and where the flow of springs had softened the surface; but the pursuers were led on by the rumble of the wagon, which swung from side to side perilously, the boxes swinging about noisily and toppling threateningly at the apex. Down the sharp declivity the wagon plunged like a ship bound for the bottom of the sea.

The pursuers bent gamely to their task in the rough road, with Cooke slightly in the lead. Suddenly he shouted warningly to the others, as something rose darkly above them like a black cloud, and a trunk fell with a mighty crash only a few feet ahead of them. The top had been shaken off in the fall, and into it head first plunged Ardmore.

"There's another coming!" yelled Collins, and a much

larger trunk struck and split upon a rock at the roadside. Clothing of many kinds strewed the highway. A pair of trousers, flung fiercely into the air, caught on the limb of a tree, shook free like a banner, and hung there somberly etched against the stars.

Ardmore crawled out of the trunk, screaming with delight. The fragrance of toilet water broke freshly upon the air.

"It's his ammunition!" bawled Ardmore, rubbing his head where he had struck the edge of a tray. "His scent bottles are smashed, and it's only by the grace of Providence that I haven't cut myself on broken glass."

"Thump! Bump!" sounded down the road.

"Are those pants up there?" asked Cooke, pointing, "or is it a hole in the sky?"

"This," said Collins, picking up a garment from the bush over which it had spread itself, "has every appearance of being his little nightie. How indelicate!"

"No," said Ardmore, taking it from him, "it's a kimona of the most expensive silk, which the colonel undoubtedly wears when they get him up at midnight to hear the reports of his scouts."

They went down the road, stumbling now and then over a bit of debris from the vanished wagon.

"It's like walking on carpet," observed Cooke, picking up a feathered chapeau. "I didn't know there were so many clothes in all the world."

They abandoned the idea of farther pursuit on reaching a trunk standing on end, from which a uniform dress-coat drooped sadly.

"This is not our trouble; it's his trouble. I guess he's struck a smoother road down there. We'd better go back," said Cooke.

"Whom the gods would destroy they first dress in glad rags," piped Collins.

They sat down and laughed until the negro approached warily with the horses.

"He's lost his raiment, but saved his life," sputtered Collins, climbing into his saddle.

"He's lost more than that," remarked Ardmore, and his flushed countenance, noted by the others as he lighted a cigarette, was cheerfuller than they had ever seen it before.

In a moment they had climbed the hill and were in hot pursuit of the adjutant-general's abandoned army.

CHAPTER XVII

ON THE ROAD TO TURNER'S

"Who goes there?"

"A jug."

"What kind of a jug?"

"A little brown jug from Kildare."

Thus Mr. Thomas Ardmore tested his pickets with a shibboleth of his own devising. The sturdy militiamen of North Carolina patrolled the northern bank of Raccoon Creek at midnight, aware that that riotous flood alone separated them from their foes. The terraces at Ardsley bristled with the guns of the First Light Battery, while, upon a cot in the wine cellar beneath, Mr. Bill Appleweight, *alias* Poteet, slept the sleep of the just.

He was rudely aroused, however, at one o'clock in the morning by Ardmore, Cooke and Collins, and taken out through the kitchen to one of the Ardsley farm wagons. Big Paul held the reins, and four of Cooke's detectives were mounted as escort. Ardmore, Cooke and Collins were to accompany the party as a board of strategy in

the movement upon Turner Court House, South Carolina.

Appleweight, the terror of the border, blinked at the lanterns that flashed about him in the courtyard. He had been numbed by his imprisonment, and even now he yielded himself docilely to the inevitable. His capture in the first instance at Mount Nebo had been clear enough, and he could have placed his hand on the men who did it if he had been free for a couple of hours. This he had pondered over his solacing solitaire as he sat on the case of Chateau Bizet in the Ardsley wine cellar; but the subsequent events had been altogether too much for him. He had been taken from his original captors by a girl, and while the ignominy of this was not lost on the outlaw, his wits had been unequal to the further fact, which he had no ground for disbelieving, that this captivity within the walls of Ardsley had been due to a daughter of that very governor of North Carolina whom he had counted his friend. Why the girl had interested herself in his seizure and incarceration; why he had been carried to the great house of a New York gentleman whom he had never harmed in the least; and why, more than all, he should have been locked in a room filled with bottles bearing absurd and unintelli-

gible titles, and containing, he had learned by much despairing experiment, liquids that singularly failed to satisfy thirst—these were questions before which Appleweight, *alias* Poteet, bowed his head helplessly.

"The road between Kildare and Turner's is fairly good," announced Cooke, "though we've got to travel four miles to strike it. Griswold evidently thinks that holding the creek is all there is of this business, and he won't find out till morning that we've crawled round his line and placed Appleweight in jail at Turner's where he belongs."

"You must have a good story ready for the press, Collins," said Ardmore. "The North Carolina border counties don't want Appleweight injured, and Governor Dangerfield don't want any harm to come to him—you may be sure of that, or Bill would have been doing time long ago. The moral element in the larger cities and the people in Boston and Springfield, Massachusetts, who only hear of Appleweight in the newspapers, want him punished, and we must express to them our righteous indignation that he has been kidnapped and dragged away from our vengeance by the governor of South Carolina, who wants him in his own state merely to protect him. We can come pretty near pleasing every-

body if you work it right, Collins. Our manner of handling the matter will do much to increase Governor Dangerfield's popularity with all classes."

"Gentlemen, it was very impolite of you not to tell me you were ready to start!" and Jerry came briskly from the side entrance, dressed for the saddle and nibbling a biscuit.

"But you are not to go! I thought that was understood!" cried Ardmore.

"It may have been understood by you, Mr. Ardmore, but not by me! I should never forgive myself if, after all the trouble I have taken to straighten out this little matter, I should not be in at the finish. Will you kindly get me a horse?"

Miss Dangerfield's resolution was not to be shaken, and a few minutes later the party moved out from the courtyard. Cooke rode several hundred yards ahead; then two detectives preceded the wagon, in which Appleweight sat on a cross-seat with two more of Cooke's men on a seat just behind him. He was tied and gagged, and an old derby hat (supplied by Paul) had been clapped upon the side of his head at an angle that gave him a jaunty air belied by his bonds. Though his tongue was silenced, his eyes were at once eloquent of

wonderment, resignation and impotent rage. Beside the wagon rode Miss Jerry Dangerfield, alert and contented. Ardmore and Collins were immediately behind her, and she indulged the journalist in some mild chaff from time to time, to his infinite delight, though considerably to Ardmore's distress of heart; for, though no words had passed between him and Jerry as to the disgraceful flight of the adjutant-general, yet the master of Ardsley was in a jealous mood. The moon had left the conspirators to the softer radiance of the stars, but there was sufficient light for Ardmore to mark the gentle lines of Jerry's face, as she lifted it now and then to scan the bright globes above.

Paul drove his team at a trot over the smooth road of the estate to a remote and little-used gate on the southern side, but still safely removed from the South Carolina pickets along the Raccoon.

"It's all right over there," remarked Collins, jerking his head toward the creek. "The fronting armies are waiting for morning and battle. I suppose that when we send word to Griswold that Appleweight is in a South Carolina jail it will change the scene of operations. It will then be Governor Osborne's painful task to dance between law-and-order sentiment and the loud cursing

of his border constituents. The possibilities of this rumpus grow on me, Ardmore."

"There is no rumpus, Mr. Collins," said Jerry over her shoulder. "The governor of North Carolina is merely giving expression to his civic pride and virtue."

Leaving Ardsley, they followed a dismal stretch of road until they reached the highway that connects Turner's and Kildare.

"It's going to be morning pretty soon. We must get the prisoner into Turner's by five o'clock. Trot 'em up, Paul," ordered Cooke.

They were all in capital spirits now, with a fairly good road before them, leading straight to Turner's, and with no expectation of any trouble in landing their prisoner safely in jail. A wide publication of the fact that Appleweight had been dragged from North Carolina and locked in a South Carolina jail would have the effect of clearing Governor Dangerfield's skirts of any complicity with the border outlaws, while at the same time making possible a plausible explanation by Governor Dangerfield to the men in the hills of the contemptible conduct of the governor of South Carolina in effecting the arrest of their great chief.

They were well into South Carolina territory now,

and were jogging on at a sharp trot, when suddenly Cooke turned back and halted the wagon.

"There's something coming—wait!"

"Maybe Bill's friends are out looking for him," suggested Collins.

"Or it may be Grissy," cried Ardmore in sudden alarm.

"Your professor is undoubtedly asleep in his camp on the Raccoon," replied Collins contemptuously. "Do not be alarmed, Mr. Ardmore."

Cooke impatiently bade them be quiet.

"If we're accosted, what shall we say?" he asked.

"We'll say," replied Jerry instantly, "that one of the laborers at Ardsley is dead, and that we are taking his remains to his wife's family at Turner's. I shall be his grief-stricken widow."

The guards already had Appleweight down on the floor of the wagon, where one of them sat on his feet to make sure he did not create a disturbance. At her own suggestion Jerry dismounted and climbed into the wagon, where she sat on the side board, with her head deeply bowed as though in grief.

"Pretty picture of a sorrowing widow," mumbled Collins. Ardmore punched him in the ribs to make him

stop laughing. To the quick step of walking horses ahead of them was now added the whisper and creak of leather.

"Hello, there!" yelled Cooke, wishing to take the initiative.

"Hey-O!" answered a voice, and all was still.

"Give us the road; we're taking a body into Turner's to catch the morning train," called Cooke.

"Who's dead?"

"One of Ardmore's Dutchmen. Shipping the corpse back to Germany."

The party ahead of them paused as though debating the case.

The north-bound party was a blur in the road. Their horses sniffed and moved restlessly about as their riders conferred.

"Give us the road!" shouted Cooke. "We haven't much time to catch our train."

"Who did you say was dead?"

"Karl Schmidt," returned Paul promptly.

Ardmore's heart sank, fearful lest an inspection of the corpse should be proposed. But at this moment a wail, eerie and heart-breaking, rose and fell dismally upon the night. It was Jerry mourning her dead hus-

band, her slight figure swaying back and forth over his body in an abandon of grief.

"De poor vidow—she be mit us," called out big Paul, forsaking his usual excellent English for guttural dialect.

"Who are *you* fellows?" demanded Cooke, spurring his horse forward. The horsemen, to his surprise, seemed to draw back, and he heard a voice speak out sharply, followed by a regrouping of the riders at the side of the road.

"We been to a dance at Turner's, and air goin' back home to Kildare," came the reply.

"That seems all right," whispered Ardmore to Collins.

"Thus," muttered Collins, "in the midst of death we are in life," and this, reaching Jerry, caused her to bend over the corpse at her feet as though in a convulsive spasm of sorrow, whereupon, to add color to their story, Paul rumbled off a few consolatory sentences in German.

"Give us the road!" commanded Cooke, and without further parley they started ahead, closing about the wagon to diminish, as far as possible, the size of the caravan. Paul kept the horses at a walk, as became

their sad errand, and Jerry continued to weep dolorously.

They passed the horsemen at a slight rise in the rolling road. The party bound for Turner's moved steadily forward, the horsemen huddled about the wagon, with Jerry's led horse between Ardmore and Collins at the rear. At the top of the knoll hung the returning dancers, well to the left of the road, permitting with due respect the passing of the funeral party. One of the men, Ardmore could have sworn, lifted his hat until the wagon had passed. Then some one called good night, and, looking back, Ardmore saw them—a dozen men, he judged—regain the road and quietly resume their journey toward Kildare.

"Pretty peaceable for fellows who've been attending a dance," suggested Collins, craning his neck to look after them.

Cooke turned back with the same observation, and seemed troubled.

"I was afraid to look too closely at those men. They seemed rather too sober, and I was struck with the fact that they bunched up pretty close, as though they were hiding something."

"They were afraid of the corpse," remarked Collins

readily. "To meet a dead man on a lonely road at this hour of the morning is enough to sober the most riotous."

"One fellow lifted his hat as we passed, and I thought—"

"Well, what did you think, Mr. Ardmore?" demanded Cooke impatiently.

"Well, it may seem strange, but I thought there was something about that chap that suggested Grissy. It would be like Grissy to lift his hat to a corpse under any circumstances. He has spent a whole lot of time in Paris, and besides, he never forgets his manners."

"But suppose it was Griswold," said Cooke, wishing to dispose of the suspicion, "what could he be doing out here? *He* hasn't Appleweight—we know that; and he has just now missed his chance of ever getting him."

They paused to allow Jerry to resume her horse, and one of the detectives joined in the conference to venture his opinion that the men they had passed were in uniform. "They looked like militia to me," and as he was a careful man, Cooke took note of his remark, though he made no comment.

"Suppose they were in uniform," said Jerry lightly; "they can do no harm, and as we are now in South Car-

olina, and they are not our troops, it would not be proper for us to molest them. Let us go on, for Mr. Appleweight's widow is not anxious to miss her train back to the fatherland."

"If they were a detail of the enemy's militia, they would have held us up," declared Cooke with finality.

But as they moved on toward Turner's, Ardmore was still troubled over what had seemed to him the remarkable Parisian courtesy of the returning reveler who had lifted his hat as the corpse passed. Grissy, he kept saying over and over to himself, was no fool by any manner of means, and he was unable to conjecture why the associate professor of admiralty, known to be detached on special duty for the governor of South Carolina, should be riding to Kildare, unless he contemplated some *coup* of importance.

The stars paled under the growing light of the early summer dawn. Appleweight, with shoulders wearily drooping, contemplated the attending cortege with the gaze of one who sullenly accepts a condition he does not in the least understand.

A few early risers saw the strange company enter and proceed to the jail; but before half the community had breakfasted, Bill Appleweight, the outlaw, was securely

locked in jail in Turner Court House, the seat of Mingo County, in the state of South Carolina, and the jailer, moreover, was sharing the distinguished captive's thraldom.

Collins, at the railway station, was announcing to the world the fact that at the very moment when Governor Dangerfield was about to seize Appleweight and punish him for his crimes, the outlaw had been kidnapped in North Carolina and taken under cover of night to a jail in South Carolina where Governor Osborne might be expected to shield him from serious prosecution with all the power of his high office.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE BATTLE OF THE RACCOON

Mrs. Atchison met the returning adventurers at the door.

"Your conduct, Jerry Dangerfield, is beyond words!" she exclaimed, seizing the girl's hands. "And so you really locked that horrid person in a real jail! Well, we shan't miss him! We have been kept up all night by the arrival here of other prisoners—brought in like parcels from the grocer's."

"More prisoners!" shouted Ardmore.

"Dragged here at an unearthly hour of the morning, and flung into the most impossible places by your soldiers! You can hear them yelling without much trouble from the drawing-room, and we had to give up breakfast because the racket they are making was so annoying."

The captain of the battery whose guns frowned upon the terraces came up and saluted.

"Mr. Ardmore," he said, "I have been trying for sev-

veral hours to see Governor Dangerfield, but this lady tells me that he has left Ardsley."

"That is quite true; the governor was called away last night on official business, and he will not return for an hour or two. You will kindly state your business to me."

The captain was peevish from loss of sleep, and by no means certain that he cared to transact business with Mr. Ardmore. He glanced at Miss Dangerfield, whom he had met often at Raleigh, and the governor's daughter met the situation promptly.

"Captain Webb, what prisoners have you taken, and why are they not gagged to prevent this hideous noise?"

Seemingly from beneath the ample porte-cochère, where this colloquy occurred, rose yells, groans and curses, and the sound of thumps, as of the impact of human bodies against remote subterranean doors.

"They're trying to get loose, Miss Dangerfield, and they refuse to stay tied. The fiercest row is from the fellows we chucked into the coal bins."

"It's excellent anthracite, the best I can buy; they ought to be glad it isn't soft coal," replied Ardmore defensively. "Who are they?"

"They're newspaper men, and they're most terribly

enraged," answered Captain Webb. "We picked them up one at a time in different places on the estate. They say they're down here looking for Governor Dangerfield."

Collins grinned his delight.

"Oh, perfect hour!" he sang. "We'll keep them until they promise to be good and print what we tell them. The little squeaky voice you hear occasionally—hark! —that's Peck, of the Consolidated Press. He scooped me once on a lynching, and here is where I get even with him."

"You have done well, Captain Webb," said Jerry with dignity, "and I shall urge your promotion upon papa at the earliest moment possible. Are these newspaper gentlemen your only prisoners?"

"No; we gathered up two other parties, and one of them is in the servants' laundry; the other, a middle-aged person, I lodged in the tower, where he can enjoy the scenery."

He pointed to the tower, from which the flag of North Carolina waved gently in the morning breeze.

"The prisoner up there made an awful rumpus. He declares he will ruin the whole state of North Carolina for this. Here is his card, which, in a comparatively

lucid interval, he gave me to hand you at the earliest possible moment," and Captain Webb placed a visiting card in Ardmore's hands.

A smile struggled for possession of Ardmore's countenance, but he regained control of himself promptly, and his face grew severe.

He gave the card to Jerry, who handed it to Mrs. Atchison, and that lady laughed merrily.

"Your prisoner, Captain Webb, is George P. Billings, secretary of the Bronx Loan and Trust Company of New York. What was he doing when you seized him?" demanded Ardmore.

"He was chasing the gentleman who's resting on the anthracite. He chased him and chased him, around a tea-house out here somewhere on the place; and finally this person in the coal hole fell, and they both rolled over together. The gentleman in the coal hole declares that he's Foster, the state treasurer of North Carolina, but his face got so scratched on the shrubbery that he doesn't look in the least like Mr. Foster."

"I have sent him witch hazel and court plaster, and we can get a doctor for his wounds, if necessary," said Mrs. Atchison.

A sergeant rushed up in hot haste with a demand

from Colonel Daubenspeck, of the North Carolina First, to know when Governor Dangerfield could be seen.

"The South Carolina pickets have been withdrawn, and our officers want orders from the governor in person," said the messenger.

"Then they shall have orders!" roared Ardmore. "If our men dare abandon their outposts—"

He turned and rode furiously toward the border, and in his rage he had traversed a thousand yards before he saw that Jerry was close behind him. As they passed the red bungalow the crack of scattering rifle-shots reached them.

"Go back! Go back! The war's begun!" cried Ardmore; but, though he quickened the pace of his horse, Jerry clung to his side.

"If there's war, and I hope there is, I shall not shrink from the firing line, Mr. Ardmore."

As they dashed into their own lines they came upon the regimental officers, seated in comfortable chairs from the red bungalow, calmly engaged in a game of cards.

"Great God, men!" blurted Ardmore, "why do you sit here when the state's honor is threatened? Where was that firing?"

"You seem rather placid, gentlemen, to say the least,"

added Jerry, coldly bowing to the officers, who had risen at her approach. "Unless I am greatly mistaken, that is the flag of South Carolina I see flaunted in yonder field." And she pointed with a gauntleted hand to a palmetto flag beyond the creek.

"It is, Miss Dangerfield," replied the colonel politely, "and you can see their pickets occasionally, but they have been drawn back from the creek, and I apprehend no immediate advance."

"No advance! Who are we to wait for them to offer battle? Who are we to play bridge and wait upon the pleasure of a cowardly enemy?" and Jerry gazed upon the furious Ardmore with admiration, as he roared at the officers, who stood holding their caps deferentially before the daughter of their commander-in-chief. Ardmore, it was clear, they did not take very seriously, a fact which she inwardly resented.

"I don't think it would be quite fair," said the colonel mildly, "to force issues to-day."

"Not force issues!" yelled Ardmore. "With your brave sons of our Old North State, not force battle! In the name of the constitution, I ask you, why not?"

"For the reason," replied the colonel, "that the South Carolina troops ate heavily of green apples last night in

an orchard over there by their camp, and they have barely enough men to maintain their pickets this morning. These, you can see, they have withdrawn a considerable distance from the creek."

"Then tell me why they have been firing upon our lines? Why have they been permitted to shoot at our helpless and unresisting men if they are not ready for war?"

"They were not shooting at our men, Mr. Ardmore. Their pickets are very tired from loss of sleep, and they were trying to keep awake by shooting at a buzzard that hung over a field yonder, where there is, our scouts inform us, a dead calf lying in one of your pastures."

"They shall have better meat! Buzzards shall eat the whole state of South Carolina before night! Colonel, I order you to prepare at once to move your troops across that creek."

The colonel hesitated.

"I regret to say, sir, that we have no pontoons!"

"Pontoons! Pontoons! What, by the shade of Napoleon, do you want with pontoons when you have legs? Again, sir, I order you to advance your men!"

It was at this crisis that Jerry lifted her chin a trifle and calmly addressed the reluctant colonel.

"Colonel Daubenspeck, in my father's name, I order you to throw your troops across the Raccoon!"

A moment later the clear notes of the bugle rose above the splash and bubble of the creek. There was no opportunity for a grand onward sweep; it must be a scramble for the southern shore over the rocks and fallen timber in that mad torrent.

And the Raccoon is a stream from all time dedicated to noble uses and destined to hold mighty kingdoms in leash. One might well hesitate before crossing this wayward Rubicon. The Mississippi is merely an excuse for appropriations, the Potomac the sporting ground of congressmen and shad. No other known stream is so happily calculated as the foamy Raccoon to delight at once the gods of battle and the gentle sons of song. It marks one of those impatient flings of nature in which, bored with creating orderly, broadly-flowing streams, or varying the landscape with quiet woodlands or meadows, she abandons herself for a moment to madness and, shaking water and rock together as in a dice-box, splashes them out with joyous laughter.

Jerry Dangerfield, seated upon her horse on a slight rise under a clump of trees a little way back from the stream, coolly munched a cracker and sipped coffee from

a tincup. Ardmore, again calm, now that Daubenspeck had been spurred to action, smoked his pipe and watched the army prepare to advance.

Beyond the creek, and somewhat removed from it on the South Carolina side, a rifle cracked, and far against the blue arch a huge, black, languorous object, rising with a last supreme effort, as though to claim refuge of heaven, fell clawing at space with sprawling wings, then collapsed and pitched earthward until the trees on the farther shore hid it from sight. A feeble cheer rose in the distance.

"They sound pretty tame over there," remarked Ardmore critically. "There's no ginger in that cheer."

"The ginger," suggested Colonel Daubenspeck ironically, "is probably all in their stomachs."

One gun from the battery was brought down and placed on a slight eminence to support the advance, for which all was now in readiness. The bugle sang again, and the men of one company sprang forward and began leaping from rock to rock, silently, steadily moving upon the farther shore. Here and there some brown khaki-clad figure slipped and splashed into the stream with a wild confusion of brown leggings; but on they went intrepidly. The captain, leading his men through

the torrent, was first to gain the southern shore. He waved his sword, and with a shout his men clambered up the bank and formed in neat alignment. This was hardly accomplished before a uniformed figure dashed from a neighboring blackberry thicket and waved a white handkerchief. He bore something in his hand, which to Ardmore's straining vision seemed to be a small wicker basket.

"It's a flag of truce!" exclaimed Colonel Daubenspeck, and a sigh that expressed incontestable relief broke from that officer.

"The cowards!" cried Ardmore. "Does that mean they won't fight?"

"It means that hostilities must cease until we have permitted the bearer of the flag to carry his message into our lines."

The man with the basket was already crossing the creek in charge of a corporal.

"I have read somewhere about being careful of the Greeks bearing gifts," said Jerry. "There may be something annoying in that basket."

The bearer of the basket gained the North Carolina shore and strode rapidly toward Miss Dangerfield, Ardmore and Colonel Daubenspeck. He handed the trifle

of a basket to the colonel, who gazed upon its contents for a moment with unspeakable rage. The color mounted in his neck almost to the point of apoplexy, and his voice bellowed forth an oath so bleak, so fraught with peril to the human race, that Jerry shuddered and turned away her head as from a blast of flame. The colonel cast the wicker basket from him with a force that nearly tore him from his saddle. It struck against a tree, spilling upon the earth six small, hard, bright green apples.

"My letter," said the emissary soberly, "is for Mr. Thomas Ardmore, and, unless I am mistaken, you are that gentleman."

Ardmore seized a long envelope which the man extended, tore it open, and read:

Thomas Ardmore, Esq.,
Acting Governor of North Carolina,
In the Field:

Sir—As I understand the present unhappy differences between the states of North and South Carolina, they are due to a reluctance on the part of the governor of North Carolina to take steps toward bringing to proper punishment in North Carolina an outlaw named Appleweight. I have the honor to inform you that that person is now in jail at Kildare, Dilwell County, North Carolina, properly guarded by men who will not flinch. If necessary I will support them with every South Carolinian able to bear arms. This being the case, a *casus belli* no longer exists, and to prevent the

effusion of blood I beg you to cease your hostile demonstrations on our frontier.

Our men seized a few prisoners during the night, and I am willing to meet you to arrange an exchange on the terms proper in such cases.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,

HENRY MAINE GRISWOLD,
For the Governor of South Carolina.

"The nerve of it! The sublime cheek of it!" exclaimed Ardmore, though the sight of Griswold's well-known handwriting had shaken him for the moment.

"As a bluffer your little friend is quite a wonder," was Jerry's only comment when she had read the letter.

Ardmore promptly wrote on the back of Griswold's letter this reply:

Henry Maine Griswold, Esq.,
Assistant Professor of Admiralty,
Camp Buzzard, S. C.:

SIR—Appleweight is under strong guard in the jail at Turner Court House, Mingo County, South Carolina. I shall take pleasure in meeting you at Ardsley at five o'clock this afternoon for the proposed exchange of prisoners. To satisfy your curiosity the man Appleweight will be produced there for your observation and identification.

I have the honor, sir, to remain, with high regard and admiration, your obliged and obedient servant,

THOMAS ARDMORE,
Acting Governor of North Carolina.

"Putting 'professor' on that will make him crazy," remarked Ardmore to Jerry.

The messenger departed, but recrossed the Raccoon shortly with a formal note agreeing to an armistice until after the meeting proposed at Ardsley.

"Colonel Daubenspeck, you may withdraw your men and go into camp until further orders," said Jerry, and the notes of the bugle singing the recall rose sweetly upon the air.

"By George," said Ardmore, as he and Jerry rode away, "we'll throw it into old Grissy in a way that will jar the professor. But when it comes to the exchange of prisoners, I must tell the boys to bring up that chap I locked in the corn-crib. I had clean forgotten him."

"I don't think you mentioned him, Mr. Ardmore, but I suppose he's one of the Appleweight ruffians."

"Undoubtedly," replied Ardmore, whose spirits had never been higher, "though the fellow was not without his pleasant humor. He insisted with great vigor that he is the governor of South Carolina."

"I wonder"—and Jerry spoke wistfully—"I wonder where papa is!"

"Well, he's not in the corn-crib; be sure of that."

"Papa looks every inch the statesman," replied Jerry proudly, "and in his frock-coat no one could ever mistake him for other than the patriot he is."

CHAPTER XIX

IN THE RED BUNGALOW

"What do you think," cried Mrs. Atchison, glowing before Jerry and Ardmore on their return; "we have a new guest!"

"In the coal cellar?" inquired her brother.

"No, in the blue room adjoining Miss Dangerfield's! And what do you think! It is none other than the daughter of the governor of South Carolina."

"Oh, Nellie!" gasped Ardmore.

"Why, what's the matter?" demanded Mrs. Atchison. "I had gone in to Turner's to look at that memorial church we're building there, and I learned from the rector that Miss Osborne, with only a maid, was stopping at that wretched hole called the Majestic Hotel. I had met Miss Osborne in Washington last winter, and you may forget, Tommy, that on our mother's side I am a Daughter of the Seminole War, a society of which Miss Osborne is the president-general. I hope Miss Osborne's presence here will not be offensive to you, Miss

Dangerfield. She seemed reluctant to come, but I simply would not take no, and I am to send for her at four o'clock."

"Miss Osborne's presence is not only agreeable to me, Mrs. Atchison," responded Jerry, "but I shall join you in welcoming her. I have heard that the ancestor through whom Barbara Osborne derives membership in the Daughters of the Seminole War was afterward convicted of robbing an orphan of whose estate he was the trusted executor, and such being the case I feel that the commonest Christian charity demands that I should treat her with the most kindly consideration. I shall gather some roses, with your permission, and have them waiting in her room when she arrives, with my card and compliments."

Ardmore had rarely been so busy as during the afternoon. Several more newspaper correspondents were found prowling about the estate, and they were added to the howling mob in the Ardsley cellars. Collins searched them and read their instructions with interest. They were all commissioned to find the lost governors of North and South Carolina; and a number were instructed to investigate a rumor that North Carolina was about to default her bonds through malfeasance of the

state treasurer. It was clear from the fact that practically every newspaper in New York had sent its best man to the field that the world waited anxiously for news from the border.

"It has all happened very handily for us," said Collins; "we've got the highest-priced newspaper talent in the world right under our hands, and before we turn them loose we'll dictate exactly what history is to know of these dark proceedings. Those fellows couldn't get anything out of either Kildare or Turner's for some time, as Paul's men have cut the wires and Cooke has operators at the railway stations to see that nothing is sent out."

"When we've settled with Griswold and proved to him that he's lost out and that the real Mr. Appleweight is in his jail, not ours, we'll have to find Governor Dangerfield and be mighty quick about it," replied Ardmore. "Paul says there's a battery of South Carolina artillery guarding the Dilwell County jail, and that they've fooled the people into thinking they're North Carolina troops, and nobody can get within four blocks of the jail. They must have somebody in jail at Kildare. I don't like the looks of it. I hope those men we left guarding old Appleweight in the Mingo jail know their

business. It would be nasty to lose that old chap after all the trouble he's given us."

"They'll keep him or eat him, if I know old Cookie."

Jerry—a pleasing figure to contemplate in white lawn and blue ribbons—suggested that the meeting take place in the library, as more like an imperial council chamber; but Ardmore warmly dissented from this. A peace should never be signed, he maintained, in so large a house as Ardsley. At Appomattox and in many other cases that he recalled, the opponents met in humble farmhouses. It would be well, however, to have the meeting on the estate, for the property would thus become historic, but it would never do to have it take place in the Ardsley library.

"There should be great difficulty in securing pens and paper," Ardmore continued, "and we must decline to accept the swords of our fallen foes."

They finally agreed on the red bungalow as convenient and sufficiently modest for the purpose. And so it was arranged.

A few minutes before five the flag of North Carolina was hung from the wide veranda of the bungalow. At the door stood an armed militiaman. Colonel Daubenspeck had been invited to be present, and he appeared

accompanied by several other officers in full uniform. Word of the meeting place had been sent through the lines to the enemy, and the messenger rode back with Griswold, who was followed quickly by the adjutant-general of South Carolina and half a dozen other officers. The guard saluted as Griswold ran up the steps of the veranda, and at the door Ardmore met him and greeted him formally.

At the end of a long table Jerry Dangerfield sat with her arms folded. She wore, as befitting the occasion, a gray riding-dress and a gray felt hat perched a trifle to one side.

She bowed coldly to Griswold, whose hand, as he surveyed the room and glanced out at the flag that fluttered in the doorway, went to his mustache with that gesture that Ardmore so greatly disliked; but Griswold again bowed gravely to his adversaries.

"Miss Dangerfield, and gentlemen," began Griswold, with an air of addressing a supreme tribunal, "I believe this whole matter depends upon the arrest of one Appleweight, a well-known outlaw of North Carolina—"

"I beg your pardon—"

It was Jerry who interrupted him, her little fists clenching, a glint of fire in her eyes.

"It is for me to ask your pardon, Miss Dangerfield! Let us agree that this person is an unworthy citizen of any state, and proceed. It has been your endeavor to see this man under arrest in South Carolina, thus relieving North Carolina or her chief executive of responsibility for him. We, on our side, have used every effort to lodge Appleweight in jail on your side of the state line. Am I correct?"

Jerry nodded affirmatively.

"Then, Miss Dangerfield, and gentlemen, I must tell you that you have lost your contention, for Appleweight spent last night in jail at Kildare, and to secure his safe retention there, we generously lent your state a few of our militia to guard him. The proceeding was a trifle irregular, we admit—the least bit *ultra vires*—but the peculiar situation seemed to justify us."

"There are not two Bill Appleweights," remarked Colonel Daubenspeck. "I assure you that the real criminal spent last night in jail at Turner Court House, guarded by trustworthy men, and we are able to produce him."

"The quickest way to settle this point, Professor Griswold, is by bringing in your man," remarked Ardmore icily.

"On the other hand"—and Griswold's tone was confident—"as there is no reason for doubt that we have the real Appleweight, and as we are on your territory and in a measure your guests, it is only fair that you produce the man you believe to be Appleweight, that we may have a look at him first."

"Certainly," said Jerry. "Our prisoner does not deny his identity. It gives us pleasure to produce him."

At a nod from Colonel Daubenspeck the orderly at the door ran off to where Cooke and the prisoner waited.

In the interval there was a general exchange of introductions at the bungalow. The adjutant-general of South Carolina was in a merry mood and began chaffing Ardmore upon the deadly character of apples found in his orchard beyond the Raccoon.

"I deeply regret," said Ardmore, rubbing his chin, "that the adjutant-general of North Carolina is suffering from a severe attack of *paralysis agitans* and will be unable to meet with us."

"I deplore the fact," replied the adjutant-general of South Carolina, "for one of our scouts picked up a darky in the highway a while ago who had on a uniform dress-coat with the initials 'R. G.' sewed in the pocket."

"If you will return that garment to me, General," said Ardmore, "I will see that it reaches Colonel Gillingwater by special messenger, where, upon his couch of pain, he chafes over his enforced absence from the field of danger."

Steps sounded on the veranda and all rose as Cooke appeared in the door, leading his handcuffed prisoner, who stood erect and glared at the company in gloomy silence.

"This man," said Ardmore, "we declare to be Bill Appleweight, *alias* Poteet. I ask you, sir,"—he addressed the prisoner—"to state whether you are not known by one or both of these names?"

The man nodded his head and grumbled a reluctant affirmative.

"Professor Griswold," Ardmore went on, "the gentleman in charge of the prisoner is Roger Cooke, for many years in the secret service of the United States. He now conducts a private agency and is in my employ. Mr. Cooke, I will ask you whether you identify this man as Appleweight?"

"There is no doubt of it whatever. I have known him for years. I once arrested him for moonshining and he served a year in the penitentiary as the result of

that arrest. You will pardon me, sir," Cooke continued, addressing Griswold directly, "but this is undoubtedly the man you had yourself captured at Mount Nebo Church two nights ago, but who was taken from you, as you may not know, by Miss Geraldine Dangerfield. She was lost in the woods and came upon the captive much to her own surprise."

Griswold lifted his brows in amazement and turned toward Jerry.

"If that is the case, Miss Dangerfield, I salute you! I am sorry to confess, however, that I did not myself see the man who was captured by my friends at the church, owing, it appears, to Miss Dangerfield's prompt and daring action, and the regrettable cowardice of my men. I want to say to you, gentlemen, in all frankness, that I am greatly astonished at what you tell me. Our prisoner is about the same height as this man, has the same slight stoop in the shoulders, and the same short beard; but there the resemblance ends."

Ardmore was trying not to show too plainly his joy at Griswold's discomfiture. None of the South Carolina officers had ever seen Appleweight, as they lived remote from the scene of his exploits. Habersham's men, who had so signally failed in the descent upon

Mount Nebo Church, had taken to the woods on the appearance of the state soldiery along the border, and could not be found to identify the man seized at the house on the creek. Habersham had discreetly declined to support Griswold's venture at the last moment; to do so would, he pleaded, ruin his chances of political preferment in the future; or worse things might, indeed, happen if he countenanced and supported the armed invasion of North Carolina by South Carolina militia. The zealous young militiamen who had captured the stranger in the house on the creek had pronounced the man Appleweight, and their statement had been accepted and emphasized when the man was taken before Griswold, to whom he had stubbornly refused to make any statement whatever.

"Now that you can not deny that we have the real Appleweight," began Jerry, "who is, you must remember, a prisoner of the state of South Carolina, and must be returned to the Mingo County jail at once, I think we may as well look at your prisoner, Professor Griswold. He may be one of Mr. Appleweight's associates in business; but as we are interested only in the chief culprit, the identity of the man you hold is of very little interest to us."

"If," said Griswold, "he is not Appleweight, the original blown in the bottle—"

"Jug, if you please!" interposed Ardmore very seriously.

"Then we don't care about him and I shall make you a present of him."

"Or," remarked Ardmore, "I might exchange him for a ruffian I captured myself down on the Raccoon. He seemed quite insane, declaring himself to be the governor of South Carolina and I locked him up in a corn-crib for safe keeping."

"Any man," said Jerry, lifting her chin slightly, "who would impersonate the governor of South Carolina would, beyond question, be utterly insane and an object of compassion. Professor Griswold, will you please produce your imaginary Appleweight, as at this hour Mrs. Atchison usually serves tea. Let us therefore make haste."

One of Griswold's retinue ran off to summon the prisoner, who was guarded by half a dozen soldiers near at hand.

The company in the bungalow were all laughing heartily at some sally by the adjutant-general of South Carolina, who insisted upon giving a light note to the

proceedings, when hurried footsteps sounded on the veranda and a sergeant appeared in the doorway and saluted.

The adjutant-general, annoyed at being interrupted in the telling of a new story, frowned and bade the sergeant produce his prisoner. At once a man was thrust into the room, a tall man, with a short, dark beard and slightly stooping shoulders. The strong light at his back made it difficult for the people grouped about the table to see his face clearly, but the air somehow seemed charged with electricity, and all bent forward, straining for a sight of the captive. As he stood framed in the doorway his face was slowly disclosed to them, and there appeared to be a humorous twinkle in his eyes. Before any one spoke, he broke out in a hearty laugh. Then a cry rose piercingly in the quiet room—a cry of amazement from the lips of Jerry Dangerfield, who had taken a step forward,

"Oh, papa!" she cried.

"The Governor!" roared Colonel Daubenspeck, leaping across the table.

"It's Governor Dangerfield!" shouted half a dozen men in chorus.

At this moment Mrs. Atchison and Miss Barbara Os-

borne stole softly in and ranged themselves at the back of the room.

The governor of North Carolina alone seemed to derive any pleasure from the confusion and astonishment caused by his appearance. He crossed to the table and took his daughter's hand.

"Jerry, what part do you play in these amateur theatricals?"

Jerry rose, thrusting her handkerchief into her sleeve, and her lips trembled slightly, though whether with mirth or some soberer emotion it would be difficult to say. The room at once gave her attention, seeing that she was about to speak.

"Papa, before these people I am not ashamed to confess that during your absence from the seat of government I took it upon myself to fill your office to the best of my ability, finding that many important matters were pressing and that you had gone into exile without leaving your address behind. I made Mr. Ardmore, the gentleman on my left in the pearl-gray suit and lavender tie, first private secretary, and then, when occasion required, acting governor, though in reality he did nothing without my entire approval. I am happy to say that nothing has been neglected and your reputation as

a great statesman and friend of the people has not suffered at our hands. We arrested Mr. Appleweight, who is standing there by the fireplace, and landed him in the Mingo County jail as a joke on Governor Osborne, and to appease the demands of the press and the Woman's Civic League of Raleigh. The copies of our correspondence on this and other matters will tell you the story more completely. And as for Governor Osborne, I have taught him a lesson in the etiquette that should obtain between governors that he is not likely to forget. You will find that we have not hesitated to grant pardons, and we have filled, in one instance, the office of justice of the peace, made vacant by resignation. The key to your desk, papa, is behind the clock on the mantel in your private room."

"Ladies and gentlemen," began the governor of North Carolina, laying a hand upon the table, and with the other seizing the lapel of his rough, brown coat—a pose made familiar by all his photographs—"the jails of North Carolina are more uncomfortable than I had believed them to be, and I have taken a slight cold which compels me to be briefer than this interesting occasion demands. You have witnessed here an exhibition of filial devotion that has, I am sure, touched us all. It is

well worth while for me to have suffered arrest and imprisonment to realize the depth of my daughter's love, and the jealousy with which she has safeguarded my private and public honor."

He felt for a handkerchief and touched it gently to his eyes; but Collins declared afterward that Governor Dangerfield was exactly like his daughter and that one never could be sure that his mirth was genuine.

"I was aware only yesterday, when I saw a newspaper for the first time in a week, that political capital was being made of my absence from Raleigh; and that my dear friend, the governor of South Carolina, also, was being called to account for flinching in the face of imperative duty."

"Your friend, Governor?" cried Ardmore, unable to restrain himself.

"Certainly, Mr. Ardmore," continued Governor Dangerfield. "That angry parting of ours at New Orleans was all for effect to get space in the newspapers. We had confided to each other that the cares of state had worn us to an intolerable point and that we must have rest. Brother Appleweight had, I confess, given us both a great deal of annoyance, and to be frank, neither Osborne nor I wished to take the initiative in his case. So

we resolved to disappear, and go to some quiet place for rest. We outfitted with old clothes and came to the border. Governor Osborne has a farm over there somewhere in Mingo County and we made it our headquarters; but in roaming about we came upon that charming shanty of yours, Mr. Ardmore, down on the Raccoon. The house was deserted, and finding the marks of the official survey running clearly through the timber, we were amused to find that the house was partly in North, partly in South Carolina. The thing touched our fancy. A negro cooked for us—what has become of him I do not know. We cut ourselves off from the mail and telegraph and received no newspapers until a packet came yesterday, and it was only a few minutes after I saw from the head-lines of the *Vidette* what a row was going on that I realized that strange things may happen when the king goes a-hunting."

As he paused, Miss Osborne stepped forward, the men making way for her.

"If this be true, Governor Dangerfield, may I ask you, sir, what has become of my father?"

Governor Dangerfield smiled.

"I regret, Miss Barbara, that I can not answer that question; I must refer it to my daughter."

"Miss Osborne," responded Jerry, "while I should be glad to assist you in recovering your father as a slight return for your having placed mine in the Dilwell County jail and kept him there all night, I regret that I am unable to be of the slightest help to you."

The perspiration was beading Ardmore's brow, but he smiled as though in joy at Jerry's readiness.

"We have taken a number of prisoners," said Ardmore, meeting the governor's glance, "and while I do not think Governor Osborne can possibly be of the number, yet I shall be glad to produce them all. There's a person in the corn-crib a little way across country whom I captured myself. I believe he's now tied to a mulberry tree a little way down the road, as he pretended to be the governor of South Carolina and I feared that he might do himself some harm."

Before he ceased speaking big Paul strode in, an angry and crestfallen man following at his heels.

"Oh, father!"

It was Barbara Osborne's voice; but whatever of anger or joy there may have been in her words and tone was lost in the shout of laughter that broke from Governor Dangerfield. The governor of South Carolina was in no such high humor. He sputtered, swore, stamped his foot

and struck the table with his clenched hand as he demanded to know the meaning of the outrageous indignity to which he had been subjected.

The more his friend stormed the more Governor Dangerfield roared with laughter, but when he could control himself he laid an arresting arm on Governor Osborne's shoulder, and spoke to Barbara.

"Barbara, may I ask whether you, like my own Jerry, have been protecting your father's fair name during his absence; and does that account for my night spent in the jail at Kildare? If so—"

Governor Dangerfield's laughter got the better of him, but Barbara, with dignity, turned to her father.

"It is quite true, that finding your absence occasioning serious remark, while your attorney-general took advantage of your absence to annoy me in a most cowardly fashion, with the kind help of Professor Griswold, I did all in my power to thwart your enemies, and to show the people of South Carolina that you were not a man to evade the responsibilities of your office. As to the details of these matters I prefer, father, to speak to you in private."

"Professor Griswold?" repeated Governor Osborne haughtily. "I believe I have not the honor of the gen-

tleman's acquaintance;" whereupon, to ease the situation, Ardmore presented his old friend.

"Governor Osborne, allow me to present Professor Henry Maine Griswold, associate professor of admiralty in the University of Virginia, and the author of—"

"Griswold?" The anger slowly left Governor Osborne's face. "Do I understand that you belong to the Virginia tide-water family of that name? Then, sir, without hesitation I offer you my hand."

"Osborne," cried Governor Dangerfield, "we have every reason to be proud of our daughters. They have done their best for us; and they seem to have acted wisely in accepting aid from these gentlemen; and now, what is to be done with Bill Appleweight."

"We have with us that requisition you left on your desk," exclaimed Barbara, turning to her father.

"I'm afraid that won't help," laughed Governor Osborne, "that requisition, Barbara, is purely Pickwickian in character."

"The disposition of Appleweight," said Cooke, "is a matter of delicacy for both of you gentlemen, and you will pardon me for thrusting myself forward, but that this affair may end happily for all, neither North nor South Carolina should bear the burden of prosecuting a

man to whom—we may say it as between friends here—the governors of both states are under some trifling obligations."

The governor of North Carolina exchanged a glance and a nod with the governor of South Carolina.

"Therefore," resumed Cooke, "we must hit upon a plan of action that will eliminate both states from the controversy. I will, with your permission, turn Appleweight over to the United States revenue officers who are even now in this neighborhood looking for him."

"No!" cried Jerry. "We shall do nothing of the kind! I met Mr. Appleweight under peculiar circumstances, but I must say that I formed a high opinion of his chivalry and I beg that we allow him to take a little trip somewhere until the Woman's Civic League of Raleigh and the carping Massachusetts press have found other business, and he can return in peace to his home."

"That," said Governor Osborne, "meets my approval."

"And I," Ardmore added, "will give him my private caboose in which to cruise the larger Canadian cities."

Two more prisoners were now brought in.

"Governor Dangerfield," continued Ardmore, "here is your state treasurer, who had sought to injure you by defaulting the state bonds due to-day, which is the first

of June. And that frowsy person with Mr. Foster is Secretary Billings, of the Bronx Loan and Trust Company, who has treated me at times with the greatest injustice and condescension. Whether Treasurer Foster has the money with which to meet those bonds I do not know; but I do know that I have to-day paid them in full through the Buckhaw National Bank of Raleigh."

Colonel Daubenspeck leaped to his feet and swung his cap. He proposed three cheers for Jerry Dangerfield; and three more for Barbara Osborne; and then the two governors were cheered three times three; and when the bungalow had ceased to ring, it was seen that Ardmore and Griswold were in each other's arms.

"Surely, by this time," said Mrs. Atchison, "you have adjusted enough of these weighty matters for one day, and I beg that you will all dine with us at Ardsley to-night at eight o'clock, where my brother and I will endeavor to mark in appropriate fashion the signing of peace between your neighboring kingdoms."

"For Governor Osborne and myself I accept, madam," replied Governor Dangerfield, "providing the flowing frock-coats, which are the vesture and symbol of our respective offices, are still in the log house on the Raccoon where I became a prisoner."

CHAPTER XX

ROSÆ MUNDI

Mrs. Atchison and Ardmore had given their last touches to the preparations for the dinner. Every window of the great house shone and a myriad of lanterns illuminated the lawns and terraces. The flags of North and South Carolina were everywhere entwined; nor were the stars and stripes neglected. They surveyed the long table in the dining-room, where gold and silver and crystal were bright upon the snowy napery.

"The matter of precedence is serious, Tommy," urged Mrs. Atchison. "I can not for the life of me remember what two monarchs do about entering a room at the same time."

"Nor do I, Nellie," said Ardmore; "unless they sprint for the door and the one who gets through first takes the head of the table. Still, that would be undignified, particularly if the kings were old and fat, and if they bumped going through the door and took a header it would jar the divine right."

"Here in democratic America," said Griswold, joining them, "there can be no such preposterous idea of precedence."

"I should think better of that notion, Professor Griswold," laughed Mrs. Atchison, "if I had never seen the goats carefully shepherded to keep them away from the lambs at functions in Washington. Democracy may be a political triumph, but it is certainly deficient socially. Personally I have always wished to bring myself in touch with the poor. Ardy is quite right that our own kind are distinctly uninteresting."

"You ought to remember, Nellie, that your idea of going slumming in a purple coupé and dressed up in your best rags is not well calculated to inspire confidence and affection among the submerged. But how to handle two governors has me fussed. You are the hostess, and it's for you to decide which excellency shall take you in. I see no way out but to match for it."

"That will be unnecessary," said Mrs. Atchison, "for the doors and the hall are broad enough for a dozen governors to march in abreast."

"That would never do, Nellie! You don't understand these things. You can't hitch up a brace of American governors in a team and drive them like a pair of horses.

At least, speaking for the Old North State, I will say that we can never consent to any such compromise."

"And I, speaking for the great Palmetto Commonwealth, not less emphatically reject the idea!" declared Griswold.

"Then," said Mrs. Atchison, "there is only one possible solution. When the rest of us have entered the dining-room and taken our places, a bugle will sound; the governor of North Carolina shall enter from the north door; the governor of South Carolina from the south door, and advance to seats facing each other midway of the table. Professor Griswold, you are an old friend of the family, and you shall yourself take me in to dinner."

The members of Mrs. Atchison's house party, well distributed among the official guests, were still somewhat at a loss to know what had happened, but it seemed to be in the air that Tommy Ardmore had at last done something, though just what was not wholly clear. It was sufficiently obvious, however, that the little girl with blue eyes who had the drollest possible way of talking, and whom one never seemed able to take off guard, had seized strong hold upon the master of Ardsley; and she, on her part, treated him with the most pro-

voking condescension. It was agreed by all that Miss Osborne was distinguished and lovely and that Professor Griswold did not seem out of place at her side.

The talk grew general after the first restraint was over, and Mrs. Atchison dropped just the right word here and there to keep the ball rolling. Governor Osborne had generously forgotten and forgiven his painful incarceration in the corn-crib, and he and Governor Dangerfield vied with each other in avowing their determination to live up to the high standards that had been set for them by their daughters.

Both governors had at almost the same moment turned down their glasses. It even seemed that they had been drilled in the part, so dexterous were they in reversing them, so nimbly did they put from them the hope of wine. The members of the house-party noted this act of the two governors with well-bred surprise; and Ardmore was grieved, feeling that in some measure the illustrious guests were criticizing his hospitality. The butler at this moment spoke to him, and much relieved he smiled and nodded. A moment later two jugs, two little brown jugs, were carried in, and one was placed quietly in front of each governor at precisely the same moment. Expectation was instantly a-tiptoe.

"Gentlemen," said Ardmore, addressing the governors, "these jugs have just been left at the house by our old friend, Mr. Bill Appleweight, *alias* Poteet, with his compliments, for the governors of the two greatest states in the Union. I note that there's a bit of pink calico around the stopper of Governor Dangerfield's jug, while Governor Osborne's is garnished with blue and white gingham."

Governor Osborne rose.

"In politics," he began, resting his hand gently on the jug, "it would be a fine thing if we could all live up to our noblest ideals, but unfortunately we must be all things to all men. What I have here is not merely the testimonial of a valued constituent, but something much subtler than that, ladies and gentlemen—a delicate proof that those of us who would command the good-will and suffrages of the people must keep a careful eye on the weather-vane. This jug, which you probably all believe contains the rude product of some hidden still, is as equivocal as a political platform. I will illustrate my meaning."

All eyes were bent upon the governor of South Carolina as he picked up the jug, twisted the cob stopper for a moment, and then poured into a tumbler which the

butler placed for him, a clear white fluid; then, turning the stopper slightly, he poured into another glass a thick milk-like liquid.

"When among my constituents I almost invariably call for a gourd for drinking purposes in preference to a tumbler; but in this company I shall abandon a custom of the plain people and yield to the habits of the sons of Mammon. I am here, I take it, once more in my official capacity as governor of South Carolina, and as I am not one to offend the best sentiments of my people, I pledge you, my friends, not in the untaxed corn whisky of Appleweight's private still, but in the excellent and foamy buttermilk of Mrs. Appleweight's homely churn."

As he concluded, Governor Dangerfield rose and performed exactly the same solemn rite with the jug before him, pouring whisky into one glass, buttermilk into the other, and leaning across the table he touched his tumbler of buttermilk to that extended by Governor Osborne. When the applause that greeted this exchange of courtesies had subsided, Governor Dangerfield was still standing, and in a quiet conversational tone, and with a manner engagingly frank, he said:

"Before it seemed expedient to follow the reform bandwagon, I held certain principles touching the drink-

ing habit. But the American bar has destroyed drinking as a fine art, and it has now become a vulgar habit. In the good old times no gentleman ever jumped at his liquor. He took it with a casual air, even with a sanctifying reluctance. The idea of rushing into a public place and gulping your liquor is repugnant to the most primary of the instincts that govern gentlemen. To precipitate a gill of applejack into that most delicate organism, the human stomach, without the slightest warning, is an insult to the human body,—ay, more, it is an outrage upon man's very soul. The aim of liquor, ladies and gentlemen, is to stay and lift the spirit, not to degrade it. Drinking at proper intervals ceased to be respectable at a fixed date in human progress—to be exact, at the moment when it was no longer a mere incident of personal or social recreation but had become a sociological and political issue, staggering drunkenly under a weary burden of most painful statistics."

"You are eminently right, Governor Dangerfield," said the governor of South Carolina, helping himself to the salted almonds; "but you have used a phrase which piques my curiosity. Will you kindly enlighten us as to how you interpret proper intervals?"

"With greatest pleasure," responded Governor Dan-

gerfield. "I remember, as though it were yesterday, my venerable grandfather saying that no gentleman should ever approach the sideboard oftener than once before breakfast, and he was himself a very early riser. I discount this, however, because he always slept with a jug of Cuban rum—the annual offering of a West Indian friend—easily within his reach at the head of his bed. It was his practice for years to sip a little rum and water while he shaved. He was a gentleman if ever I knew one and as I look upon him as a standard authority in all matters of deportment and morals, I may safely cite him further in answer to your question.

"During the long open season in our country my grandfather constantly rode over the plantation in immaculate white duck followed by a darky on a mule carrying a basket. On our ancestral estate there were many springs giving the purest and coldest of water, and these were providentially scattered at the most convenient intervals for my grandfather's comfort. And as a slight return to nature for what she had done for him in this particular, my grandfather, in his early youth, had planted mint around all these springs. I need hardly point out the advantages of this happiest of combinations—a spring of clear, icy water; the pungent bou-

quet of lush mint; the ample basket borne by a faithful negro, and my grandfather, in his white duck suit and a Panama hat a yard wide, seated by the mossy spring, selecting with the most delicate care the worthiest of the fragrant leaves.

"Now"—and Governor Dangerfield smiled—"I can see that you are all busy guessing at the number of stops made by my grandfather in the course of a day, and I hasten to satisfy your curiosity. My grandfather always started out at six o'clock in the morning, and the springs were so arranged that he had to make six stops before noon, and four in the afternoon; but at five o'clock, when he reached home all fagged out by a hard day's work and sorely needing refreshment, a pitcher of cherry bounce was waiting for him on the west gallery of the house. After that he took nothing but a night-cap on retiring for the night. To my friend, the governor of South Carolina, I need offer no apologies for my grandfather, once a senator in Congress, and a man distinguished for his sobriety and probity. He was an upright man and a gentleman, and died at ninety-two, full of years and honors, and complaining, almost with his last breath, of a distressing dusty feeling in the throat."

When, as time passed, it seemed that every one had

told a story or made a speech, it was Ardmore's inspiration that Griswold should sing a song. The associate professor of admiralty in the University of Virginia had already pledged the loyalty of his state to her neighbors and twin sisters, the Carolinas, and Barbara, who wore a great bunch of her own white roses, had listened to him with a new respect and interest, for he spoke well, with the special grace of speech that men of his state have, and with little turns of humor that kept the table bubbling merrily.

"I shall comply with your request, my friends, if you can bear with the poor voice of one long out of tune, and if our host still has in the house a certain ancient guitar I remember from old times. But I must impose one condition, that I shall not again in this place be called by my academic title. I have known wars and the shock of battle along the Raccoon"—here his hand went to his lips in the gesture that had so often distressed Ardmore—"and I have known briefly the joy of a military title. Miss Osborne conferred on me in an emergency the noble title of major, and by it I demand hereafter to be known."

The governor of South Carolina was promptly upon his feet.

"Henry Maine Griswold," he said in his most official manner, "I hereby appoint you a major on my staff with all the rights, privileges and embarrassments thereunto belonging, and you shall to-morrow attend me personally in my inspection of our troops in the field."

As the guitar was placed in Griswold's hands, Ardmore caused all the lights to be turned out save those on the table. In the soft candle-glow Ardmore bent his face upon Jerry, who had been merrily chaffing him at intervals, but who feigned at other times an utter ignorance of his presence on earth. As Griswold's voice rose in the mellow dusk it seemed to Ardmore that the song spoke things he could not, like his friend, put into utterance, and something fine and sweet and hallowed—that sweet sabbath of the soul that comes with first love—possessed him, and he ceased looking at Jerry, but bent his head and was lost in dreams. For the song and the voice were both beyond what the company had expected. It was an old air that Griswold sang, and it gave charm to his words, which were those of a man who loves deeply and who dares speak them to the woman he loves. They rose and fell in happy cadences, and every word rang clear. In the longer lines of the song there was a quickening of time that carried the sense of passion, and

Griswold lifted his head when he uttered them and let them cry out of him.

One of Barbara's white roses had fallen into her lap and she played with it idly; but after the first verse it slipped from her fingers and she folded her arms on the table and bent her gaze on the quiet flame of the candle before her. And this was the song that Griswold sang:

Fair winds and golden suns
Down the year's dim aisles of gray depart;
But you are the dear white rose of the world
That I hide in my heart.

Last leaves, and the first wild snow,
And the earth through an iron void is whirled;
But safe from the tempest abide in my heart,
O dear white rose of the world!

Blithe air and flashing wing,
And awakened sap that thrills and flows;
But hid from the riot and haste of the spring
Sleeps one white rose.

O scattered leaves of days!
O low-voiced glories that fade and depart!
But changeless and dear through the changing year
Blooms one white rose in my heart.

The last words hung tremulously, tenderly, on the air, and left a spell upon the company that no one seemed anxious to break; then there was long applause and cries

of encore; but Ardmore, who knew that his friend had been greatly moved, drew attention away from him to Collins, who had just entered the room.

The correspondent had been called away shortly before from the table, and he wore the serious air of one heavy with news.

"I beg to report that I have just completed a treaty with the journalists assembled in the cellar."

"I hope, Mr. Collins, that the journalists' convention below stairs realized that the lobster we sent them for supper was not canned, and that the mushrooms were creamed for their refreshment by Mrs. Atchison's special command. It is not for us to trifle with the dignity of the press," said Jerry.

"The reputations of two governors and of two states are in their hands," said the governor of South Carolina, with feeling. "It would be a distressing end of my public services if the truth of all these matters should be known. The fact that Governor Dangerfield and I had merely withdrawn from public life for a little quiet poker in the country would sound like the grossest immorality to my exacting constituency."

"Both yourself and Governor Dangerfield will be relieved to know that they have accepted my terms and all

is well," responded Collins. "They will tell the waiting world that you have both been the guests of Mr. Ardmore, and that the troops assembled on the Raccoon are merely at their usual summer maneuvers. As for Appleweight, it has seemed expedient that he should be dead, and the man who has been called by that name of late is only an impostor seeking a little cheap notoriety. The boys are very sick of the cellar, and they would do even more than this to get away."

"Mr. Collins," said Governor Dangerfield, rising, "your great merits shall not go unrewarded. I have carelessly neglected to appoint a delegate from North Carolina to the annual conference of the Supreme Lodge of the Society of American Liars shortly to meet at Lake Placid, New York. As a slight testimonial of my confidence and admiration, I hereby appoint you to represent the Old North State at that meeting, and your expenses shall be paid from the public purse."

"The boys wish to see your excellencies before they leave," said Collins when he had acknowledged the governor's compliment; and as he spoke the sound of great cheering broke through the windows, and Mrs. Atchison promptly rose and led the way to the broad terraces which were now gay with colored lanterns.

"Speech! Speech!" cried the corps of correspondents. Then Ardmore seized Governor Osborne's hand and led him forward to the balustrade; but before the governor of South Carolina could speak the group of newspaper men began chanting, in the manner of a college antiphonal:

What did he say to you?
What did he say to you?
What did who say?
What did the governor of North Carolina
SAY
To the governor of South Carolina?

"Gentlemen," began Governor Osborne, speaking with great deliberation, "I am profoundly touched by the cordiality of your greeting. (Applause.) Amid the perplexities of my official life I am deeply sensible always of the consideration and generosity of our free and untrammeled American press. (Cheers.) Without your support and approval, my best aims, my sincerest endeavors in behalf of the people, must fall short and fail of their purpose. (A voice: You're dead right about that.) I am proud of this opportunity to greet this most complimentary delegation of men distinguished in the noble profession of which Greeley, Raymond and Dana were the high ornaments. (Cheers.) I look into your

upturned faces as into the faces of old friends. But I dare not—(A voice: Oh, don't be afraid, Governor!)—I dare not take too personally this expression of your good-will. It is not myself but the great state of South Carolina that you honor, and on behalf of mine own people, who have always stood sturdily for the great principles of the constitution; (Cheers) who have failed in no hour of the country's need, but have tilled their fields in peace and defended them in the dark days of war, I thank you, my friends, with all my heart, again and again." (Applause and cheers.)

What did you say to him?
What did you say to him?
What did who say?
What did the governor of North Carolina
SAY
To the governor of South Carolina?

"On an occasion so purely social as this," began Governor Dangerfield, balancing himself lightly upon the balustrade, "it would be most indelicate for me to discuss any of the great issues of the day. (A voice: Oh, I don't know!) I indorse, with all the strength of my being, and with all the sincerity of which my heart is capable, the stirring tribute paid to your noble profession by my friend, known far and near, and justly known, as

the great reform governor of South Carolina. (Cheers.) I am proud that the American press is incorruptible. (Cheers.) Great commercial nation though we be, the American newspaper—the American newspaper, I say, is one thing that is never for sale. (Applause and cheers.) The temptation is strong upon me to take advantage of this gathering of representative journalists to speak—not of the fathers of the constitution, not of Jefferson or Jackson, but of living men and living issues (Cheers and cries of Let 'er go!); but the hour is late (A voice: Oh, not on Broadway, William!) and, to repeat, it would be the height of impropriety—a betrayal of the bountiful hospitality we have all enjoyed (A voice: Our lobster was all right. Another voice, with ironical inflection; *This* lobster is all right!), a betrayal, I say, of hospitality for me to do more, gentlemen, than to thank you, and to say that in your strong hands the liberties of the people are safe indeed." (Prolonged cheering.)

As the correspondents marched away to take the special train provided for them at Kildare by Ardmore, they continued to cheer, and they were still demanding, as long as their cries could be heard at Ardsley:

What did he say to him?
What did he say to him?
What did who say?
What did the governor of North Carolina
SAY
To the governor of South Carolina?

With a sigh Ardmore left them at the great gates of Ardsley and returned to the house to find Jerry; but that young woman was the center of a wide circle of admiring militia officers, and the master of Ardsley was so depressed by the spectacle that he sought a dim corner of the grounds where there was a stone bench by a fountain, and there, to his confusion, he beheld Miss Barbara Osborne and Henry Maine Griswold; and Miss Osborne, it seemed, was in the act of fastening a white rose in Professor Griswold's coat.

CHAPTER XXI

GOOD-BY TO JERRY DANGERFIELD

The next morning Ardmore knocked at Griswold's door as early as he dared, and went in and talked to his friend in their old intimate fashion. The associate professor of admiralty was shaving himself with care.

"You won't have any hard feelings about that scarlet fever business, will you, Grissy? It was downright selfish of me to want to keep the thing to myself, but I thought it would be fun to go ahead and carry it through and then show you how well I pulled it off."

"Don't ever refer to it again, if you love me," spluttered Griswold amiably, as he washed off the lather. "I, too, have ruled over a kingdom, and I have seen history in the making, *quorum pars magna fui.*"

"But I say, Grissy, there is such a thing as fate and destiny and all that after all; don't you believe it?"

"Don't I believe it! I know it!" thundered Griswold, reaching for a towel. He lifted a white rose from a glass of water where it had spent the night and re-

garded it tenderly. "The right rose under the right star, and the thing's done; the rose, the star and the girl,—the combination simply can't be beat, Ardy."

Ardmore seized and wrung his friend's hand for the twentieth time; but he was preoccupied, and Griswold, fastening his collar at the mirror, hummed softly the couplet:

> With the winking eye
> For my battle-cry.

"Grissy!" shouted Ardmore, "she never did it!"

"Oh—bless my soul, what was I saying! Why, of course she wasn't the one! Not Miss Dangerfield—never!"

"Well, you like her, don't you?" demanded Ardmore petulantly.

"Of course I like her, you idiot! She's wonderful. She's—"

He frowned upon the scarf he had chosen with much care, snapped it to shake the wrinkles out, humming softly, while Ardmore glared at him.

"She's wise," Griswold resumed, "with the wisdom of laughter—accept that, with my compliments. It's not often I do so well before breakfast. And now if you're to be congratulated before I go back to the groves

of Academe pray bestir yourself. At this very moment I have an engagement to walk with a lady before breakfast—thanks, yes, that's my coat. Good-by!"

Breakfast was a lingering affair at Ardsley that morning. The two governors and the national guard officers who had spent the night in the house were not in the slightest hurry to break up the party, for such a company, they all knew, could hardly be assembled again. The governors were a trifle nervous as to the attitude of the press, in spite of Collins' efforts to dictate what history should say of the affair on the Raccoon; but before they left the table the Raleigh morning papers were brought in and it was clear that the newspaper men were keeping their contract.

"I congratulate you, Dangerfield," said Governor Osborne. "I only hope that the Columbia and Charleston papers have done half as well by me."

Both governors had decided upon an inspection of such portions of their militia as were assembled on the Raccoon, and a joint dress parade was appointed for six o'clock.

Ardmore, anxious to make every one at home, saw the morning pass without a chance to speak to Jerry; and when he was free shortly before noon he was chagrined

to find that she had gone for a ride over the estate with her father, Governor Osborne, Barbara and Griswold. He went in pursuit, and to his delight found her presently sitting alone on a log by the Raccoon, having dismounted, it appeared, to rescue a fledgling robin whose cries had led her away from her companions. She pointed out the nest and directed him to climb the tree and restore the bird. This done he sat down beside her at a point where the Raccoon curved sweepingly and swung off abruptly into a new course.

"I hope your father didn't scold you for anything we did," he began meekly.

"No; he took it all pretty well, and promised that if I wouldn't tell mama what he had been doing—about coming down here with Governor Osborne just to settle an old score at poker—mama doesn't approve of cards, you know—that he would make me a present of a better riding horse than the one I now have, and he might even consider a trip abroad next summer."

"Oh, you mustn't go abroad! It's—it's so lonesome abroad!"

"How perfectly ridiculous! Has it never occurred to you that I am never lonesome, not even when I'm alone."

"Well," said Ardmore, who saw that he was headed

for a blind alley, "I'm glad your father was not displeased with our work."

"He'll think we did pretty well after he's read our correspondence in his letter books. I told him the stamp we stamped his name with worked better with the red ink pad than with the black one, which ought, at any rate, to be clear enough to a man of papa's intelligence."

"Did you tell him about that railroad lawyer from New York who wanted to suppress the law which compels all locomotive whistles to be tuned to E flat?"

"No; that man sent me a ten-pound box of candy, which was highly improper, considering papa's position, and I should have scorned to accept the candy only I had forgotten to keep his card."

"And besides," added Ardmore gently, "you had eaten the candy. Don't you remember that you left nothing but a few burnt almonds which you wanted to keep for eating filapenas?"

"Don't be silly!" ejaculated Jerry contemptuously.

"It's a good thing all this fuss about the Appleweight people is over or I should be worse than silly. My mind was not intended for such heavy work."

"I think you have a good mind, Mr. Ardmore," said

Jerry, with the air of one who makes concessions. "You really did well in all these troubles, and you did much better than I thought you would the day I hired you for private secretary. I think I could safely recommend you to any governor in need of assistance."

"You talk as though you were getting ready to discharge me," said Ardmore plaintively, "and I don't want to lose my job."

"You ought to have something to do," said Jerry thoughtfully. "As near as I can make out you have never done anything but study about pirates and collect pernicious books on the sinful life of Captain Kidd. You should have some larger aim in life than that and I think I know of a good position that is now open, or will be as soon as papa has cleared out the peanut shells we left in his desk. I think you would make an excellent adjutant-general with full charge of the state militia. You have already had experience in the handling of troops, and as Rutherford Gillingwater never did anything but get typhoid fever to earn the place, I see no reason why papa should not appoint you to the position."

"But you have to get rid of Gillingwater first," suggested Ardmore, his heart beating fast.

"If you mean that he has to be removed from office, I will tell you now, Mr. Ardmore, that Rutherford Gillingwater will no longer sign himself adjutant-general of North Carolina. I removed him myself in a general order I wrote yesterday afternoon just before I told papa that you and I could not act as governor any longer, but that he must resume the yoke."

"But that must have been a matter of considerable delicacy, Miss Dangerfield, when you consider that you are engaged to marry Mr. Gillingwater."

"Not in the least," said Jerry. "I broke our engagement the moment I saw that he came here the other night all dressed up to eat and not to fight, and he is now free to engage himself to that thin blonde at Goldsboro whom he thinks so highly intellectual."

Jerry held up her left hand and regarded its ringless fingers judicially, while Ardmore, his heart racing hotly against all records, watched her, and with a particular covetousness his eyes studied that trifle of a hand.

Then with a quick gesture he seized her hand and raised her gently to her feet.

"Jerry!" he cried. "From the moment you winked at me I have loved you. I should have followed you round

the world until I found you. If you can marry a worthless wretch like me, if—oh, Jerry!"

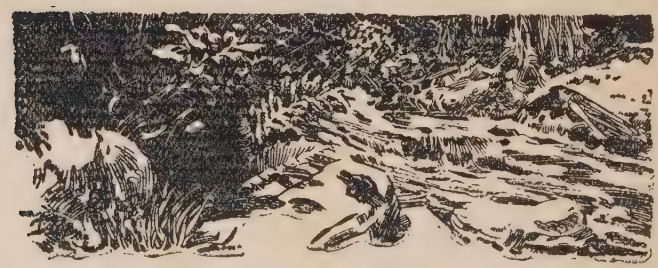
She gently freed her hand and stepped to one side, bending her head like a bird that pauses alarmed, or uncertain of its whereabouts, glancing cautiously up and down the creek.

"Mr. Ardmore," she said, "you may not be aware that when you asked me to be your wife—and that, I take it, was your intention—you were standing in South Carolina, while I stood with both feet on the sacred soil of the Old North State. Under the circumstances I do not think your proposal is legal. Moreover, unless you are quite positive which eye it was that so far forgot itself as to wink, I do not think the matter can go further."

The slightest suggestion of a smile played about her lips, but he was very deeply troubled, and, seeing this, her eyes grew grave with kindness.

"Mr. Ardmore, if your muscles of locomotion have not been utterly paralyzed, and if you will leave that particular state of the Union which, next to Massachusetts, I most deeply abhor, I will do what I can in my poor weak way—as father says in beginning his best speeches—to assist you to the answer."

Then for many æons, when he had his arms about her,

a kiss, which he had intended for the lips that were so near, somehow failed of its destination, and fell upon what seemed to him a rose-leaf gone to Heaven, but which was, in fact, Jerry Dangerfield's left eye. His being tingled with the most delicious of intoxications, to which the clasp of her arms about his neck added unnecessary though not unwelcome delight. Then she drew back and held him away with her finger-tips for an instant.

"Mr. Thomas Ardmore," she said, with maddening deliberation, "it may not be important, but I must tell you in all candor that it was the other eye."